The Free Church Movement in England.

DAVID HEATH.

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THE FREE CHURCH MOVEMENT IN ENGLAND

THE FREE CHURCH MOVEMENT IN ENGLAND

A STATEMENT OF FACTS AND AN EXPOSITION OF PRINCIPLES

BY

DAVID HEATH

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PREFACE

THE following pages were prepared (in the form of six lectures) for the students of Ranmoor College, Sheffield, at the request of the Methodist New Connexion Conference. The writer is, however, alone responsible for the opinions advanced.

The work is submitted to the public in the hope that it will assist in making the true inwardness of the Free Church movement better understood, both by the Nonconformists themselves and by the members of other communities.

The author has striven to be appreciative of views differing from his own. Nevertheless he has not been desirous of presenting a colourless historic narration of events, but has aimed at setting forth the positive and constructive proportions of Free Church principles.

It will be a special gratification to the writer to find that he has helped to foster in the younger generation of Free Churchmen a spirit of intelligent and loyal devotion to the Church of their fathers.

INTRODUCTION

THE central idea of our present enquiry is, that the essentially spiritual nature of the Christian religion requires, as its expression and vehicle, a freely organised and self-governing body. The ultimate question of ecclesiastical statesmanship is, along what line of church fellowship and co-operation can the New Testament idea of religion, as a spiritual force in the individual believer, and as an evangel to mankind, be best realised?—the Church free in its own life and action? or the Church in any organic alliance with the State? The question is, therefore, not only or mainly an academic one; neither is it mainly ecclesiastical; still less is it a political question. The spiritual nature of the Christian faith and the spiritual character of the Christian Church are the only true correlatives. Our enquiry thus concerns what is vital to religion in its inwardness as well as in its manifestations.

Several things have helped to bring the Free Church question to the front, chiefly two things, viz.—(1) The discovery of the fallacy and feebleness of the Oxford movement. After long trial, during which it has had ample opportunity of proving itself, and during which the Free Churches have looked on, wondering what the issue would be, the ritualistic movement has failed to arrest and retain the educated

classes of the country, and it has equally failed, in any special degree, to Christianise the masses. Its most conspicuous results have been (*a*) the adornment of worship, and (*b*) the revolt in the Anglican Church from the Reformation settlement. Disappointment in the failure, and alarm at the result, have pressed upon public attention the question whether, after all, the Free Church position is not the true one? The "governmental paralysis" of the Anglican Church in dealing with irregularities of ritual and discipline has added great force to the reaction which has undoubtedly set in. (2) Then, again, and concurrently with this discovery, the Free Churches have been drawing together, and have learned more clearly than was possible in their isolation, *first*, the essential unity of doctrine, of spirit, and aim of all those Churches, notwithstanding their diversity of operations; and, *second*, that in the aggregate of their work and successes they have had phenomenal progress in numbers, in finances, in spiritual force, in national influence for righteousness. The formation of the *National Evangelical Free Church Council* has served the admirable purpose of focussing these separated forces, and its statistical literature has surprised the world by the record of the fact that the present balance of the Protestantism of the world is on the side of evangelicalism and voluntaryism.

The movement with which we have to deal may be said to have commenced in the 16th century with certain bold, brave men who would be done with the tyranny of the Pope of Rome, and who were thus far at one with the general body of Reformers, but who also went further by opposing the kingly headship of the Church, and claimed that the Church should not

be under any external political control in its spiritual affairs. But this movement was not a spontaneous creation of that century any more than was the Reformation itself. The ample justification of the Reformation, both as a doctrinal and ecclesiastical revision, lies in the fact that it was so far a reversion to type, a movement for the removal of erroneous accretions, an attempt to restore historic and Catholic faith and observance. It cannot be said that the Reformation aimed at a complete restoration of the Church to its original type, it took steps toward the simpler and purer times, but in its historic recession it stopped short of the end. On the other hand the justification of the Free Church movement lies in the fact that it did not stop short of that end, but fearlessly reverted to the New Testament—the apostolic type, and judged all else by that.

The Reformation and the Free Church movement are therefore not to be confused with one another. All parties were for a time within the one Church and unitedly sought the reform of abuses, the correction of belief and the termination of the Papal supremacy. But all *that* was possible without there being an evolution of Free Churchism. There never would have been such an evolution but for the extreme men who would go farther than the main body of Reformers were prepared to go. These advanced men would have indoctrinated their fellow-churchmen; they did not propose to separate themselves from the Established Church, but to remain in it and free it, seeking their end by lawful argument. Their ultimate separation was forced upon them, not sought by them, and by their ejection their movement necessarily became an outside movement, and in that sense

antagonistic to the Church of England. Their hope at first was to carry forward the work of reform and freedom to its logical completion, and yet maintain the organic unity of the Church. They were first *doctrinal* Nonconformists refusing to subscribe to the whole Prayer-book, as containing much that was contrary to their convictions. *Ecclesiastical* Nonconformity was forced upon them by the refusal of the Church to be free and by the policy of ejection which the Church adopted. The Free Church movement was thus the outcome of the Reformation, not by the development of quiet reasonableness and natural process, as its advocates desired it to be, but by the dominance of the contrary opinion in the Church, which was expressed in mistaken and revengeful persecution.

Ecclesiastically the Reformation only aimed at exchanging the Papacy for the Monarchy. With sufficient approach to accuracy we may say the Reformation was nowhere a Free Church movement, but a Protestant and purifying movement, which left the Church under external and political influence and control. In the Lutheran Church in Germany the ecclesiastical authority of the Pope passed into the hands of the territorial princes; and everywhere the Reformation allowed one form or another of State alliance. Here in England the Reformed Church might have become a truly Free Church, and an enormous amount of pain and scandal would thus have been prevented; but she would not, and the creation of a new Church organisation was the only possible issue. One man cast out of the synagogue might be incapable of further trouble, and be compelled to live in spiritual isolation—though Church history has shown the disaster to which single ex-

pulsions have led. But when hundreds and thousands together are cast out, consisting largely of the clerical order, in the nature of things they must unite; they could do no other than stand by one another in their suffering and peril; they must frame for themselves a church ordered after their convictions; and if there is any ground for the taunt of schism, it falls back upon those who created conditions which left no other course open to intelligent, conscientious, and devout men.

Since the revolt of which we speak was the taking up of an ancient and lost thread, it is important that we determine where that thread shall be looked for. What period of the Church's history shall be taken as providing the true test of the Church? Shall we act independently of all precedent and authority, and be a law to ourselves? There will be few to take up that position, since no man and no community of men can ignore the facts of history. At the head of those historic facts stand the records of the Founder of our religion, and of those immediately associated with Him; and to those records we must allow unique claims upon our attention and reverent regard, containing as they do the essence of religion and the germ of the Church. In judging the character, constitution, and powers of any Christian community, shall we look for surest light and guidance to the Reformed Church of the 16th century, or to the un-Reformed Church of an earlier time? say, to the Church of the 15th century which was rent by schism in the Papacy itself? or of the 14th century when the Pope began to be styled "Our Lord God the Pope," and the clergy were dissolute and imperious? or of the 13th century when the cup was denied to the

laity and the Scriptures were practically forgotten? or of the 12th century when the Pope's political power was so great that he was a King of Kings? or of the 11th century—a century of relics, beads, and pretended miracles? or of the 10th century when the dogma of transubstantiation was set forth and the Vatican was ruled by prostitutes? or of the 9th century which Cardinal Bellarmine characterised as the most unlearned and unhappy of any age? or of the 8th century when the worship of images was confirmed by the Second Council of Nice? or of the 7th century—the age of Boniface IV., and disfigured by the worship of the Virgin Mary and the Saints in the new Pantheon, and when public worship came to be everywhere offered to God in the one Latin tongue? or the 6th century when the Lord's Supper came to be called a sacrifice and Masses were said for the dead? or the 5th century when pictures and images were introduced? or the 4th century when priests generally were held in higher esteem if they were celibate; the century also of the great surrender of the Church's freedom? or to the 3rd century when the Sacraments were greatly elaborated, that of baptism being observed in milk, and honey, and oil? Or, again, shall we go back to the Reformers? to the monastic orders? to the schoolmen? or to the Apostolic Fathers? or shall we go back to the Apostles themselves and to the Master at whose feet they knelt?

The answer of the Reformers was brief and clear so far as doctrine and discipline were concerned. The answer of the Free Churchmen was the same as that of the Reformers for the extended area which their contention covered, including polity as well as

doctrine. Both parties would adopt Bishop Hooper's dictum—"Let controversy be settled by the authority of the Word. Let no one defend his (own) opinion with obstinacy." That is where we stand to-day—accepting the New Testament alone, and Apostolic practice as the living exposition of the Word spoken and written. We set little value upon any period in the interval, marked and marred by divisions, contradictions, heresies, and corruptions enough to render hopeless any attempt to ascertain the mind of Christ through them. To use the simile of Martin Luther in speaking on this very point—"The milk has been strained through a coal sack." A promise was made by the Master that "the spirit of truth shall guide you into all truth"; this promise was made to the whole Church in all time, but it had its perfect fulfilment only in the Apostolic age, when a special degree of illumination was given as a qualification for the unusual work they had to do in compiling the records of our Lord's life, in giving oral and written declarations of essential truth, and in gathering together and organising communities of Christian believers. After that formation period a lesser degree of illumination was necessary, the truth having taken tangible shape before men's eyes. He would be a bold man who would take up the position that the Church in post-Apostolic times had been as surely led by the Spirit of God as were the Apostles. "God is not a God of confusion, but of peace" (I. Cor. xiv., 33).

Within strict lines of definition, the question of State Church *versus* Free Church is a question of ecclesiastical politics—*i.e.*, whether State and Church should be organically one or separate. But it has never been that simple issue only. It has involved

the doctrine of the Church itself—*i.e.*, the nature of the Church, its orders, functions, and powers. It carries with it the nature of the Christian ministry, and the function of the minister—whether or not it be hierarchical. This again is made to depend upon our conception of the Sacraments, particularly that of the Lord's Supper; indeed, the doctrinal issues involved may be narrowed down to that one question —the nature of the Communion or Sacrament—and that determines the question of *Minister* or *Priest.* Therefore, as a matter of fact the Free Churches have always been doctrinal as well as ecclesiastical dissenters, opposing the sacerdotal doctrine both of the Romanists and Ritualists by a positive doctrine of the evangelical type.

Four points cover our inquiry—(1) The Church, its organisations and functions. (2) The question of "establishment" of the Church. (3) The Sacrament of the Supper, and (4) the pastorate. It will be our concern to perceive what the New Testament teaches. And from what we learn there it will not be enough to come to negative or destructive conclusions, but we must arrive at positive and constructive convictions.

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGINAL TYPE

(1) AS FORESHADOWED BY CHRIST

BOTH Christianity and the Church which embodies it owe their inception and development to Christ and His Apostles, whose words and acts are recorded in the New Testament. If we would know the religion of Christ, and the manner of the Church which was founded to represent it, we must not depart from those simple and sacred records. There is the touchstone of all methods and customs, of all explanations and traditions, of all conclusions of Councils, of all assertions of authority.

But in applying this test let us be careful to avoid mere literalism. We should seek great principles, which may be applied in a hundred different ways, rather than precise and detailed specifications, which might be only locally practicable. It is not sufficient for the condemnation of a practice or doctrine to say that it has no verbal allowance in the New Testament. And it is no justification of a practice or an opinion to say that it is not in so many words forbidden in the New Testament. The Great Teacher did not say all He had to say, all it was important His followers should hear. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come He shall guide you into all truth" (John xvi., 12, 13). It is thus probable, yea, certain, that the Holy Spirit will guide the Church to thoughts and acts, the facsimiles of which are not found in the Book. From this point of view it is no argument against State Churchism merely that it is of post-Apostolic origin: and no argument against transubstantiation and its related priesthood to say that they date later than the first century. The final contention is whether these, or any other things, are natural developments of the original teaching, or, on the contrary, are opposed to that teaching, and therefore subversive of the intention of Christ. Whatever else the Spirit has to teach the Church, this is our test by which to know it—trying the spirits whether they be of God (I. John iv., 1)—that any ideas and practices proposed to us must at anyrate be in harmony with what is written, and favourable to the evident design of the Holy Founder of our faith. There will be no contradiction between Christ and the Spirit. The Spirit will take of the things of Christ and show them unto us. All essential truth has been recorded. If we attempt to mend the Christianity of Jesus Christ we shall be only helping to end it. But if there be anything on which the New Testament says nothing cognate, either in verbal statement of principle or concrete precedent in actual Church life, then we may feel at liberty to exercise the best sense we have, and pray for Divine blessing. The records are so wonderfully comprehensive in suggestion that it is scarcely conceivable that an entirely new and unanticipated question can arise.

During His residence in Nazareth, Jesus was a

faithful, and for aught we know an unprotesting, adherent of the Jewish Church. He observed its feasts and fasts; He stored His mind with its laws; and His will naturally habituated itself to obedience. The Courts of the Temple at Jerusalem became familiar to Him, and His visits were frequent enough for Him to become personally known to great numbers of people who regularly went up to the Holy City. On ordinary Sabbaths, and the appointed week-days, He attended the local synagogue—it was His custom to do so. The rulers of the synagogue of His own village called upon Him at times, or in His turn, to read the Scriptures or give an exposition or exhortation. It is evident that He stood well among His neighbours, and that they who knew most of His mind and manner of life recognised nothing heretical or revolutionary in Him. There is nothing remarkable in all this, or really inconsistent with the subsequent course of events. There is something exceedingly beautiful in it all. But as to His special mission "His time had not yet come." He must needs fulfil all righteousness, and set an example of reverence.

The Jewish Church of Christ's day had its affairs in its own hands. Their Roman masters allowed it to be so, hence Pilate said to the assembled Jews who had brought Christ before him—"Take ye Him and judge Him according to your law" (John xviii., 31), supposing it to be a religious question outside his own function. Philosophic historians have pointed out a number of circumstances helping to "the fulness of time," and making ready for the Messiah and His Gospel. We do not remember this important factor being mentioned in this connection, that the Church

had lost its political status—was indeed a free Church. This freedom Christ never deplored, although Jews regarded the separation of the political and spiritual power as abnormal and unfortunate.

When Jesus left Nazareth and entered definitely and openly upon His destined work, we might have expected a sharp cleavage between Himself and the old Church. But there was no such cleavage; He continued to observe the solemnities at Jerusalem, and to keep up the fellowship of the synagogue—the means by which the reverence and enthusiasm and humanities of His race had been nurtured for over two thousand years. He even continued to teach in the synagogue, and at Jerusalem He taught also in the Temple: yet we discover no revolutionary word that came from His lips. And when He had disciples of His own, and had chosen twelve of them to be Apostles of His Church and Kingdom, He and they went together to the frequented centres of religious faith and loyalty. The very evening of His betrayal they spent together in keeping up the time-honoured Paschal Supper. "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy but to fulfil" (Matt. v., 17).

Nevertheless the chief officers, upholders, and teachers of the law conceived a feeling of bitter hostility to Him; and He, who had come to know their true character so well, more than once rebuked their unrighteousness and hypocrisy. It would thus appear that if there must be a breaking away from the Temple and synagogue, it will come to pass, not through disapproval of, and disloyalty to, the old Church, but through the impossibility of personal relations between Him and the men at its head, and

the multitude who followed their lead. It is significant how He discriminates between the Church and its high officials, never confusing the one with the other, never speaking against the Church, never failing to condemn its chief representatives; always faithful in sentiment and practice to the Church, even though the men who occupied its chief seats were so unworthy of respect. To the very last He honoured the law by obedience; and to the last there could be no reconciliation between Him and the priests and scribes, or between Him and the Pharisees and Sadducees—the two great doctrinal sects of the day, against both of which He cautioned His disciples (Matt. xvi., 6-12).

Christ's hope was to win that old Church and graft upon it the new Vine. He would have realised the symbolism and spirit of the old reverence by transfiguring it with His own personality and inspiration. He laid His plan sufficiently open to view, and met with no response in quarters where response was practically essential to success. By parable and declaration and exposition He set forth His mission and His personal place, and He supported His claims and appeals by wonders wrought on nature and human nature, on the living and on the dead.

In pursuit of this hope He chose Apostles (men who are sent) whom He commmissioned to go into the cities and villages that He Himself would afterwards visit. They were to heal the sick, and preach, saying—"The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." But they were not to go to the Gentiles, nor even to the Samaritans, but "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. x., 7-8). First He chose the twelve (the original number of united Israel), and of these

He tenderly said at the end—"Ye have been with Me from the beginning." Afterwards He sent seventy others (Luke x., 1-17). From them would probably be selected Apostles of whom we read after the Ascension. Clearly their work in the first instance was to prepare the minds of the people for the new departure, with the working out of which the people outside the official circle might have little to do, but for the peaceable, intelligent, and effective accomplishment of which the concurrence and goodwill of all were necessary.

If the rulers and the people had been friendly instead of antagonistic, the Friend of all would have gathered Israel, as a hen her brood, and so He would have given them rest; the redemption of the Temple, and the religion it represented, would have been happily effected, and the religion of the Jews would have blossomed and fruited into the religion of the whole human race. The promise to the Patriarch, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, was graciously and gloriously fulfilled in making a "Son of David," and therefore a "Son of Abraham," to be the Saviour of all men. The fulfilment would have certainly appealed to us as being historically more complete and perfect had Judaism accepted its own transformation and consummation. The work of the Atonement would still have been accomplished, and Leviticism perfected, though not in the violent way, with its wicked incidences, in which it was ultimately accomplished.

But the suppositious "if"—*if the rulers had acted differently*—has no history of fact attached to it. They would not reverence the Son; they were blinded by their pride, self-interest, and callousness, so they

did not see the day of grace; the realisation of His hope along that line was rendered practically impossible by their daily opposition to Him, and their final and complete rejection of Him.

Whilst their action did not save them, it did not prevent the realisation of His hope in another way. The Son of God accepted the conditions of redemptive service that are common to all men, as a part of His voluntary humiliation; and, like them, finds that as one door closes another opens when the will of God has to be done. God can make new doors where there are none. For entrance into the Heavenly City, for the accomplishment of the Divine purpose, there are many ways. The Holy City John saw is an apocalyptic parable of this truth: there are—"On the east three gates, on the west three gates, on the north three gates, and on the south three gates" (Revel. xxi., 13). When God makes a shining sun, He gives it a place in the firmament from which to shine. The 'light of the world" shall not be lost for want of its appropriate place. And every little candle that is lit shall have its candlestick. Hence, though Christ's method was diverted, His work was not destroyed. The New Covenant may not be endorsed on the old document, a "New Testament" must be prepared. From an early point in our Lord's ministry it is plain that for the new wine a new bottle must be provided; the old leathern vessel has become tainted with an unholy ferment, and to put the new wine into it would end in the loss both of wine and bottle. The inevitable parting of the ways is traceable in His words to the Greeks—"I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me" (John xii., 32), and especially in His tears and lament as He viewed the city and thought of

what it might have been, and of the desolation and destruction which hung over it (Luke xix., 41).

In view of that catastrophe, Christ anticipated and initiated a new line of operation, to be ready when the actual necessity arises. He will not trust to a candlestick which cannot be re-set upon its base, and must therefore soon be taken away. He had a love for the old Church, but no false sentiment about breaking the line of historic continuity—and he broke it as clearly as it could ever be broken, and yet religion survived in the knowledge of God and the revelation of His will. We find the Master meeting His disciples—as His disciples, and not merely as personal friends—and saying to them—"On this rock (named in Peter's great confession) I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matth. xvi., 18). His followers are to be a typical society in the midst of the large community, and they are told several things concerning their new relation to one another: (1) They are marked off from society generally—"It shall not be so among you" (Matth. xx., 25), referring to the ambition and masterfulness and revengefulness of the world. (2) They are to learn to settle their personal differences among themselves, and not resort either to physical violence or external power. (*a*) In that way scandal will be prevented; and (*b*) in the then existing corruption of public justice they would be more likely to have justice done. Therefore let the two brethren who quarrel make haste to settle their differences reasonably and in the spirit of Christ; failing that, let two or three witnesses be called in that every word may be established; failing that, "tell it to the Church," and if the irreconcilable one will not hear the Church,

then, says Christ, "Let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican" (Matth. xviii., 17). (3) And the Divine teacher set forth the self-governing and independent position of the Church when He said—"Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose shall be loosed in Heaven (Matth. xviii., 18), words which, Bishop Gore says, "assist the autonomy of the Church in the spiritual realm."

In further anticipation, the Master gave His followers a service of memorial of Himself, saying—"Do this, as oft as ye do it, in remembrance of me" (Luke xxii., 19), linking His institution to the Paschal commemoration, a domestic feast, in which they had just united, and not to a temple sacrifice.

After the Resurrection no reference is made to Judaism, nor to any attendance on His part at Temple or synagogue. The first day of the week becomes the holy day instead of the seventh day (Acts xx., 7). He rallies His scattered followers, and tells them to wait for the great spiritual gift which will be their necessary equipment. And the former command, to "go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," is substituted by the greater command—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Matth. xxviii., 19). "Where two or three are met together in My name there am I in the midst of them." "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matth. xxviii., 20). To a woman of Samaria He had previously said—"The hour cometh when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. . . . The hour cometh and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth" (John iv., 21-23).

In connection with this it will not escape attention that Christ did not make either the Temple or the synagogue the centre of His work. His work had no such centre; it gathered, and was ever to gather, around Himself alone. No particular place was essential, no place a Holy of Holies. Men are near God as they are near Him—"The way, the truth, the life." And wherever the reverent worshipper meets God, there is the home of God and the gate of Heaven. If the rulers and people of the Jews had favoured the spiritualising and universalising of their Church, their Temple and nation would have remained, but the Temple would have lost its uniqueness in the larger and better conception. What the Central Temple would in that case have lost the local synagogue would have gained.

As to the temporal power, or the alliance of religion with the State, there is no word to indicate that Christ ever desired or intended it. That is not to be wondered at so far as the empire was concerned—heathen empire as it was. The only thing the Imperial power did for Christ was to crucify Him. Between Him and that power there could be no alliance. But, what is more, He never anticipated any change in the existing relation; never responded to the secular thoughts of His followers when they desired the return of the old days when the Kingdom was with Israel, when Church and State were virtually one; and He distinctly disfavoured the use of force in His propaganda or in His own defence. On the contrary, He announced that the Kingdom of Heaven belonged to the lowly and the pure; it was a Kingdom not of this world but of the truth; in it the rule of precedence and honour is personal work and

service; but those who take to the sword shall perish by the sword. With remarkable consistency and energy He taught the inwardness and spirituality of religion—"Ye must be born again." "To Cæsar the things of Cæsar, to God the things which belong to God" (Luke xx., 24).

It is nothing to the contrary of all this that in our Lord's teaching "Church" occurs only twice, and "Kingdom" a hundred and twelve times. Kingdom would fit in best with the original hope, and would convey definite ideas to His hearers of organisation, order, and authority. Kingdom is the determinative of Church; but that only serves to emphasise the fact that the Church is a Kingdom in having its King, its laws, its independence, and its non-interference with or by the secular authority. "Who made Me a judge and a director among you?" (Luke xii., 14).

In these anticipations, our Lord gave no outline of an ecclesiastical organisation. He did not appoint any Church officers in the natural and proper sense of that term; the Apostles, as Apostles, do not answer to that description, their one function being to go hither and thither declaring the gospel of the Kingdom.

Yet an organised Church is certainly contemplated—a body which may be defined, a visible Church which may be approached and which may express judgment. The essential unit is the personal and regenerated believer. The Catholic Church is composed of all such throughout the world. The visible organisation, also called the Church, is composed of believers who unite in fellowship and join hands in service. For this Church a service of witness and commemoration is appointed, lest we forget

the new Passover; a service in which the elements used are of no value, save as reminders of a broken body and of shed blood, for "the flesh profiteth nothing," the Master Himself took the precaution to say. For the comfort and instruction of this Church the Holy Spirit is promised who shall be with the disciples even as Christ himself had been, only more intimately and universally and uninterruptedly, not only with them, but "in them."

In laying down these lines Christ did more than at first appeared. It was not a new school or party that He formed, still within the old Church, as were the sects of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. He did more than found a rival Church, which might for indefinite generations challenge and compete with Judaism. His fulfilment of the Law made the Law obsolete. The Levitical system became one of the dead languages of religion; the era of spiritual life and illumination had come. All physical sacrificial offerings are completed and ended in the one offering, "once for all." And therefore, and more than ever, the inspired Church is its own authority; is not of this world, and yet will ultimately enlighten, leaven, save the world, though at first it appears only as a candle shining in a dark place, a little leaven in three measures of meal, a handful of salt of penetrating power in the whole body politic.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGINAL TYPE

(2) AS REALISED BY THE FIRST CHRISTIAN AGE

WHAT interpretation was given to the Founder's anticipations by those who received the great name and the great task?

The Apostles had more to do in giving shape to the Master's idea than any other persons. As His contemporaries and companions and disciples, they would be credited with the best knowledge of His mind and the clearest perception of His spirit. It was inevitable and right that they should powerfully influence the course of events, else why had they been so intimately with Him from the beginning, under His special influence and training? In their own realm of experience and knowledge they were without rivals, and held an unique place in history, a position incapable of succession.

The Church of the Apostolic age seems not to have had any "burning questions" in regard to government, but to have deliberately, yet definitely shaped them in the way they thought most fitting and effective, one thing at a time as occasion arose. They did not sit round a table to form "a constitution." Experience and the good spirit taught them as they had need. The indefiniteness of the idea they had

received, beyond the essential requirement that the brotherly feeling must dominate them all, is shown in the supposed case already referred to—the case of a personal disagreement or injury. After other courses have failed to effect a reconciliation, "tell it to the Church." But Christ gave no instructions how the Church, as an authoritative court of equity, should be constituted; neither did He indicate the method of its procedure, only that the common and equal brotherhood is to be maintained: the obligation to abide by the decision given is assumed; refusal of the obligation may justly be visited by the severance of brotherly relations.

The Apostles and disciples continued their observance of the Law, notwithstanding the violent rejection of their Master by the rulers of the Jews and notwithstanding His anticipation of His Church followed by the inspiration and insignia of Pentecost. It is open to question whether they acted wisely in doing so. They misunderstood Him in other things —*e.g.*, what He had told them about His speedy return. Concerning their relation to the old Church when He was gone from them He said nothing except that they would be cast out of the synagogue. There was reason that He should encourage the continuance of the types until their fulfilment had been accomplished in His own death. But that reason could hold good no longer. Nevertheless, rightly or wrongly, they kept up the symbolism; and their example was the occasion of the first great contention within the Church—as to whether the Law was still binding on Christian consciences.

Whichever way that question may be settled, those first disciples of the ascended Messiah met together

as Christians in their own rooms, for their own particular religious ordinances; and they decided certain matters concerning the community, and appointed various officers for the orderly and efficient conduct of affairs. They also entered upon the world-wide task imposed upon them, and no lingering hope remained that in any sense the Kingdom would be restored to Israel. They saw no incongruity in observing the old order whilst at the same time they pushed forward the new order with an enthusiasm that burned like a fire. The process by which the new should supplant the old was left to work itself out naturally and slowly. But none the less the disciples were a Christian Church.

Dr. Dale was of the opinion that "the Church came into existence on the Day of Pentecost." Others may think it began when Christ called Andrew and Simon Peter, Philip and Nathanael, one of whom recognised Jesus as the Messiah, and another of whom may be credited with the second earliest Christian creed—"Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel" (John i., 40-9), the earliest of all being that of the Baptist, who exclaimed—"Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." The question as to the precise point at which the Church came to be is of little importance except as it bears upon our conception of what is essential in the constitution and function of a Church.

The Apostles and people were not without knowledge and experience. There was no necessity to strike out for themselves absolutely new lines—that is not usually the way either of Divine Providence or human wisdom. The way of Providence is to utilise human knowledge as far as it will go. The disciples

had before them, in the Jewish Church, two distinct suggestions or patterns—(1) The Temple, wholly connected with sacrifices which required High Priests and scribes; and (2) the synagogue, with its simple service of worship, absolutely without sacrifices, but having psalm, the reading of the Law with exposition and exhortation, and prayer, the officers of the synagogue being Rulers and Elders. Which of these two lines will the Apostles and disciples take?

The Temple type would naturally commend itself to them, as representing what was most imposing, national, and essential in religion, and as appealing to any feeling of personal ambition or self-importance that might be in their minds. The synagogue represented what was simplest, most individualistic, and in management it was the most democratic. They had already eaten of the bread, and drunk of the cup, and if they entertained any sacerdotal view of that service, that would inevitably have exercised a controlling influence in their decision. We are certain they were led only by the single motive, the desire and determination to give the noblest effect to the Master's own purposes. The line they followed was that of the synagogue. The Temple is not the Jewish analogue of the Christian Church.

"Church" now becomes the major note and "Kingdom" the minor. There is a Church at Jerusalem (Acts viii., 1), at Cæsarea (xviii., 22), at Corinth (I. Cor. 1., 2), and in many other cities, marking the progress of the missionary labours of the Apostles and of "the scattered" disciples. We read even of "the Church in thy house" (Philemon, 3) —a domestic microcosm of the whole Church, or a small community of the faithful whose only meeting

place is the house of Philemon, "our beloved and fellow-worker." It is noticeable that "Temple" is never applied to those companies of believers, nor to any place where they assembled. Neither do we find "synagogue" applied to these bands of Christians or their meeting places. Why were these familiar and endeared titles dropped, and a Greek word employed instead? We have the answer in these considerations—(1) The feeling of the Apostles that the Christian Church was not expressible by the old terms—terms which had come to represent certain ideas, and which, applied to the Christian community, would have been anachronisms. (2) *Kurios* (Lord) has a personal element which they can well, and will gladly, appropriate, for to them the Lord is the Church in much the same sense as in Pressense's phrase "Christ is Christendom." (3) And if *Ecclesia* is the word they use, we still perceive that it is the ideal community which is meant to be suggested, even though the actual congregation in any one place is the *synagogue*; and because the latter term has Judaistic associations the former is preferred as the designation of the Christian Church (*vide* Hasting's Dict. of B.—"Congregation"). (4) And a still further reason for discarding the use of Temple and synagogue may have been a prudential one. Saul of Tarsus changed his name to *Paul* as a concession to Gentile prejudice against a Jewish name. For a similar reason the early Church, commissioned with a world-wide evangel, would take what care it could not to be implicated either with local Judaism or with the temples of the heathen, and they used the title least liable to misunderstanding everywhere—Ecclesia—the congregation or

assembly, appropriating it as a description of the body of Christian believers.

With so little precise instruction as to Church polity, we might expect that local ideas and conditions would lead to various modifications of any particular example. At the same time the Churches first formed, especially the mother Church at Jerusalem, would set the type or model for the other Churches, especially as the Apostles, who for the most part founded those first Churches, would naturally give similar instructions to all as the bonds of brotherhood and the modes of worship and government. Hence, everywhere we meet with substantially the same system of fellowship and management.

What do we find? There are at first disciples and Apostles only. By common consent the title Apostle is reserved for men who have personally known Christ, who had companied with the twelve, and who could witness to the Lord's resurrection. Thus any one of the five hundred of whom Paul writes (1 Cor. xv., 6) might become an Apostle. When an Apostle is required in place of him "whose habitation is desolate and whose episcopate another must take," the choice is not claimed by the eleven in the exercise of any prerogative belonging to them as a class, but the choice is made by the assembled disciples (the Ecclesia)—about a hundred and twenty in number (Acts i., 20-26). The Church in that instance exercised the function which Christ had exercised.

This was the first legislative act of the new community, and it took place before the day of Pentecost. By that act the assembly realised their corporate existence, and that seems to us to mark the

actual commencement of organised Christianity—the visible Church. The action was taken at the suggestion of Peter himself, and formed the precedent which afterwards guided the Church. After this election we read of others, as of the Apostle Barnabas (Acts xiv., 14), of Sylvanus and Timothy (I. Thess. ii., 16). If we ask who ordained Matthias, we are simply answered in the words—"He was numbered with the eleven Apostles" (Acts i., 26), or who ordained Paul, we are told by Paul himself that he was an Apostle not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father Who raised Him from the dead (Gal. i., 1), as if the Head of the Church would thus early demonstrate that the true setting apart and sending forth are in His own hands, and may be in His only.

Are men required to superintend the work initiated by an Apostle? The Church appoints an *Episcopos* or *Presbyteros.* Ireneus (A.D. 190) speaks of the two as synonymous, and signifying overseer or superintendent: by his time there were many who had charge of single churches, and others who were district or diocesan superintendents, having a number of churches under their care. The overseer acted in conjunction with the local council in the administration of the Church's affairs.

As the community grew, new ministries were needed—such as attention to the poor and to the more purely business details of church arrangements. Again, at the suggestion of the Apostles, but not by their personal act, deacons are chosen by "the multitude of the disciples" who have been called together for the purpose (Acts vi., 6).

It was seemly and right that those who were

chosen to the more important place and service of the Church should be inducted to their offices by something of stately ceremony: the voice and act of the Church were therefore fittingly and formally embodied in a final act of appointment by the Apostles, with the laying on of hands and prayer. But ordination was not the creative or the qualifying event in the process. The ordination assumes both the call and the qualification.

A question arose in Antioch which greatly stirred and sharply divided the Church, composed of Jewish and Gentile converts, on the necessity or otherwise of Christian believers submitting to the Jewish rite of circumcision. Jews from Judea had gone down and taught them to be circumcised. How was the difficulty dealt with? Paul and Barnabas go from Antioch to Jerusalem for the purpose of consulting the Mother Church. They are "received by the Church Apostles and Elders." The Apostles and Elders had long debate on the question, after which we read—"Then pleased it the Apostles and Elders with the whole Church to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas." Letters were written, and sent by them, after this manner—"The Apostles and Elders and brethren send greeting," and then narrating the opinion of the Church in Jerusalem. That was how an authoritative judgment was arrived at. Then, when the deputation and Paul and Barnabas arrived at Antioch, they gathered the multitudes together and delivered the Epistles, and the Church "rejoiced for the consolation" (Acts xv.).

The Church at Rome is charged by St. Paul not to be too exacting in their demands on candidates for

Church membership—"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations" (Rom. xiv., 1). On the other hand, writing to the lax Corinthians (I., v., 13), the same Apostle says the Church must exercise discipline upon unfaithful and unworthy members—"Put away the wicked man from among yourselves."

In these typical references it will be noticed that certain titles are carefully and significantly avoided. (1) *Hiereus* is avoided, so there is no suggestion of a sacrificial altar or of a sacrificing priest. (2) The early Church avoided the synagogue title *arche* or *archisun* as if they feared its introduction among brethren. (3) So also they have no place for *politarches*, which might lead to abuse in civic as well as in religious matters. These old words with their old associations are left out where they might have been expected to be inserted had there not been a deliberate intention; and other words are introduced, as in Heb. xiii., 7, 17, 24 (*hegeomai*) and I. Tim. iii., 5; v., 17 (*Proistemi*).

We notice another thing, viz., that whilst an Apostle was greater than an *episcopos* in his moral influence, and as an authority on the facts and teaching of our Lord, he having seen the Lord, and learned at first hand, yet in local and legislative influence—in the regular working of the Church—the *episcopos* was greater than the *Apostolos*. It could hardly be otherwise, since the Apostle went from place to place, often rapidly, whilst the overseer remained in the same city or district.

Now what do these typical references illustrate and demonstrate?

(1) They show that the Church of the New Testa-

ment was fashioned from within, as experience and circumstances suggested and required—a free and self-governing body. It was thus far a spontaneous product of the spirit of liberty which God had given, the same essentially in the associated life of the brotherhood as in the experience of the individual soul. We may therefore adopt the language of John Owen, quoted in *Ecclesia*, vol. ii. p. 370—"Whatever is required by the light of nature in such societies as Churches, useful unto their order, and conducting unto their end is a Divine revelation."

(2) The New Testament exhibits a system of government, as well as of worship, characterised by simplicity, naturalness, and openness, which enfranchised the whole Church, and brought it into effective touch with all matters of doctrine and discipline and administration. There is nothing that suggests "we rule, and you obey;" and partly for that reason we discover no signs of "governmental paralysis." Any Church founded on the lines laid down, can, at any time, make its judgment clear and effective.

(3) We perceive also, that the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was a gift to the whole Church and not to a few favoured souls only, who in that case might have claimed vision and inspiration above the rest of the members: "they were all (*i.e.*, the hundred and twenty persons) with one accord in one place, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." And not only so, but Peter followed up his address to the multitude who had been attracted by the strange phenomena, with an assurance that if they would repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,

they also should receive the like gift of the Holy Ghost, "for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts ii., 1, 3, 4, 38). In the possession of that common gift they proceeded together to do all that had to be done in conducting the affairs of the Church of which they were members.

There is an additional reference that may be made, to show how "the twelve" recognised this spiritual equality of privilege, and it is all the more powerful because it is not of the nature of formal statement or authoritative verdict, but proceeds on the assumption of universal spiritual equality. When Jesus had kept the Passover, and substituted the memorial supper, we are told that he did so "with the twelve." Those men if they had been influenced by exclusive ideas as to their rank above the disciples might naturally have said—"this is a memorial *we* have to observe." But "disciple" is more with them than "Apostle," the whole body of believers more than "the twelve." And, with true instinctive interpretation of facts, the Apostles immediately brought the Church to their side, and all united on common ground in doing this—the one act of the Church most significant of unity and equality.

As a spiritual community the only indispensable condition of membership was possession of spiritual life—a life essentially personal and inward, realised and maintained by faith, and carrying its own outward proofs in abstention from evil and the doing of good. The basis of the New Testament Church is personal regeneration. This is the core of the Saviour's teaching, the final result of the plan of redemption, of the Spirit's power. Renewed souls throughout the world

are the Church of the living God; they are the Holy Catholic Church. Wherever two or three such souls unite in His name, He is in the midst, and there you have not only *a* Church, the local portion of the Church, but there you have *the* Church as really as you can have it anywhere. These souls are the Churchmen, and the Churchmen, with Christ in the midst, are the Church. This is the High Churchism of the New Testament, which invests the whole body with light and life and authority. "The Church is not an institution of the clergy, but a living society of all Christians" (Dr. Thos. Arnold). We are not surprised to read in the book of the Acts (xii. 24, and xiii. 52), that "the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost," and, "the word of God grew and multiplied." This was the Church which vanquished paganism, which not only did without any manner of alliance with the Empire or province, but achieved its victories in face of imperial fires. The memorable words of the younger Pliny to Trajan (A.D. 110)—less than twenty years after St. John) can never be allowed to pass out of sight—"The Christians are found everywhere, of all ages and ranks; the temples are almost deserted. They sing a hymn to Christ as God; there is no crime among them and no immorality."

We have spoken of the opening of the new era—of the conscious identity of the Church of Christ—of the inspiration at the Pentecost—of the definite legislative acts of the new community. Let us go back a stage, and mark a Divine signal that the old era was closed.

It was more than a coincidence that as Jesus was dying on the Cross, exclaiming—"It is finished," the

most sacred enclosure of the Temple was for the first time opened, not by the hand of man, to the view of every passing worshipper and sightseer. To turn aside the veil that screened the Holy of Holies had been punishable with death. Only the High Priest, and he only on one day in the year—the day of Atonement, entered that shrine where the mercy seat was fixed, where the ark of the covenant rested with its precious documents and relics, and where the cherubim hovered over the mercy seat, "the Holy Ghost thus signifying that the way into the holy place hath not yet been made manifest" (Heb. ix., 4, 8). That annual entrance was the most solemn event in the Jewish calendar; and whilst it witnessed to the mercy of God through sacrifice, it also witnessed to and fostered the sense of distance between God and the thousands of worshippers gathered round that sanctum. "Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the Ghost. And, behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Matt. xxviii., 50, 51).

The consternation of the Temple officials at seeing that open space, and the hasty repair of the breach, or the untimely bringing out of the duplicate veil, are things left to our imagination. It requires little fancy to picture the stream of people on the next day—the day of Passover—who would notice the mend in the veil, or still more notice a new veil, and be set awondering as they hear of the weird omen of the previous day. And when the companies of pilgrims returned to their homes, they would add an element of "uncanny" mystery to the stories they told their friends as they described the opening of the long closed screen.

But the Epistle to the Hebrew Christians, many of whom had seen that veil, and all of whom had come to know of it, gave the key to the mystery—"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" "Nor yet that He should offer Himself often; as the high priest entereth into the holy place year by year with blood not his own; else must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once at the end of the ages hath He been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. ix., 14, 25, 26). And the Apostle Peter, writing to the disciples scattered by the persecution at Jerusalem (presumably mostly Jews), says they are "living stones, built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I. Peter ii., 5). Far away from the Temple and its oblations these scattered ones have the true altar, the true house of God, the true sacrifices God expects of them, viz., spiritual sacrifices. And again the writer to the Hebrews says—"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say His flesh; and having a great priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith" (Heb. x., 19-22). "Priesthood ceased to be an office when it became universal" (Fairbairn).

We have now seen what manner of stones are specified in the New Testament for the founding and building of the Church of Christ. An essentially spiritual body is contemplated, and the steps actually

taken were such as would give the fullest realisation of that idea. We see a Church dependent only upon its spiritual resources and the resultant moral force which it must inevitably gain; a Church in no sense carnal, worldly, or autocratic, but imbued with affectionate devotion to a bodily absent but a spiritually present Lord; a Church whose sword was the Word of God, whose affairs were within its own control, whose autonomy brought the whole community into living interest in all its concerns; and a Church which no more sought to usurp the function of political government than it admitted political interference within its own spiritual realm.

These facts represent the constant features or marks of a true Christian Church, admitting of wide differences in details and titles, but fixing the principles of spiritual liberty, equality, and fraternity, and particularly demonstrating the autonomy of the Church. Whether the Church shall be what we describe as Episcopal, Congregational, or Presbyterian is a matter of secondary importance so long as the foundation principle—the enfranchisement of the Church—is maintained. In other words, the New Testament supplies us with the working principle, to depart from which is to open the way for all manner of abuses. We are free to be spiritual but not to be materialistic; we are free to be free, but not to be fettered.

The Free Church movement was a reversion to type. But between the one period and the other, a long interval of fifteen centuries elapsed. In the interval the type was lost. It will, therefore, be necessary to give some account, however brief, of the great departure, by which the Church became sacer-

dotal, the episcopate hierarchical, the presbyter a priest, the memorial a sacrifice, the free Church a fettered one, and the free State a vassal State, with the result that the Church itself became corrupt, the community depressed, and reformation or anarchy became the only alternatives both for Church and State.

CHAPTER III

DEPARTURE FROM THE TYPE

(1) THE MOVEMENT TOWARD LEVITICISM

THE renaissance of Judaism in the 16th century was the occasion of the Free Church movement, or, to use the language of life instead of the language of art, that was the mischief which crept into the Church and which the Free Church reformers desired to undo. It will therefore be necessary to give attention both to the tendency toward Judaism and the tendency toward Caesarism. Dr. Thomas Arnold, a broad Churchman, and still more famous as the Master of Rugby School, said the High Churchmen of his day were Judaisers; he feared the Church of England would have to be destroyed for the sake of the Church of Christ; and he thought nothing would save the Church but union with the Dissenters.

The first generation of Christians kept up the practice of attending the synagogue and Temple, and of observing the festivities connected therewith, until the Temple was destroyed by Titus (A.D. 70). At Corinth Paul reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and sought to persuade Jews and Greeks (Acts xviii., 4). The frequent use of synagogues by the Christians is indicative of the wide liberty of

speech allowed to anyone who had an opinion to express. Perhaps also it is significant of the hope of the Christians that the Jewish synagogues would become Christian churches, as in modern missions many a heathen temple has changed hands and use. St. Paul also hastened from Assos to Jerusalem that he might not miss the feast of Pentecost (Acts xx., 16). Such references to this Apostle's example are the more remarkable since he was emphatically the Apostle to the Gentiles, and since he was the champion of those who claimed liberty to leave the old order. On the part of many there was no sense of inconsistency in being a disciple, even an Apostle, of Christ, and at the same time a keeper of the Law. There was evidently no desire and no attempt to break sharply with Judaism, but to use it as far as they pleased and as long as it lasted.

There is, nevertheless, a change of attitude as compared with pre-Pentecost days. Three things are noticeable.

(1) Attention to the Law had become voluntary. Some did observe it, others did not, and neither were to be condemned. For instance, take the question of the Sabbath, which was a crucial question with the Jews. Paul insisted on the right of individual liberty of conscience and action—"Let every man be fully assured in his own mind. He that regardeth the day regardeth it unto the Lord; he that regardeth not the day to the Lord he doth not regard it" (Acts xiv., 5-6).

(2) The day of Judaism was known to be a short one. The Master's prophecy was definite enough to make that conviction clear—"The days shall come upon thee when thine enemies shall cast up a bank

about thee, and compass thee round and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke xix., 41-4., Mark xiii., 1-2).

And (3) any authoritative or formal adoption of Judaism by the Christian Church was distinctly discountenanced by the Apostles. The Judaising Christians were strongly opposed by St. Paul, himself "a Hebrew of the Hebrews." "There cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman: but Christ is all and in all" (Colos. iii., 11). In Gal. iii., 24-5, there is a rebuke of an attempt to enforce Jewish ordinances—"The law hath been our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith is come we are no longer under a tutor." The old is in the new, not by repetition but by fulfilment; the type has given place to the anti-type, the shadow to the substance, the long succession of sacrifices has consummated in the one sacrifice offered once for all, so that there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. The most strongly prejudiced of all the Apostles was Peter, yet even he gave way to the admission of Gentiles through faith in Christ and "without the works of the Law."

The city and Temple of the Jews became historic memories. Their destruction terminated the attempt to attach Judaism to the Church of Christ, and from that time the new community went on its way untrammelled by the vestments of Leviticism.

But vestments are more easily cast off than ideas are cast out. The mental habit re-appeared in a

subtle and persistent form. Both Jewish and Gentile believers had been previously trained in sacerdotal ways—the Jew by the Levitical system, the Gentile by one form or another of idolatry characterised by material sacrifices. The priest was common to them both. They had in this an heritage coming down from many generations, producing a certain habit of mind, a mental preparedness for the subtle idea that, whilst the former sacrifices were consummated in the one sacrifice of Christ, the latter might be set forth and continuously embodied and realised for the Church on earth in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, which should thus become a real presence of the Lord and essential to a living unity with Him. Trained as they had been, and this idea taking hold of their imagination, it was easy of conception that the bread and wine should be transmuted, and transmuted only through the offices of a priest. They were naturally prepared for all this. It was difficult for them wholly to shake off the old. This was to them a happy way of keeping the genius of the old whilst following the new. It was a materialistic temptation which the Church ought to have withstood, but into which it only too easily fell. It was the great error, the great surrender of the Church's simplicity and spirituality, and by it the whole history and character of the new community were diverted.

Error as to the Sacrament may have first suggested the idea of *the priest*, or, *vice versa*, exaggerated notions of the clerical office may have led to the idea that the official consecrating act turned the Sacrament into a sacrifice. It is difficult to say which was the process of thought. It is more important to note that the co-related ideas largely, if not universally, pre-

vailed by the end of the 3rd century, and that after the 3rd century the ministry was made more and more a distinctly separate order from the laity, one social sign of which was that the clergy were forbidden to be in business, and celibacy was regarded with special approval. Dr. Fairbairn says the Judaising tendency in the Christian Church was equivalent to the non-fulfilment of the old Law, and attributes it to the desire to make the Christian teacher parallel with the Jewish priest—"The old religion had its priesthood, the new had its clergy; and so these two were made parallel. Once they had been made parallel it was necessary to do the same for the worships; and once they were assimilated the New Testament ceased to fulfil the Old, the Old reigned in the New. And this is what Cyprian shows us: he represents the victory of the older religions, the rejuvenescence of Judaism, the entrance of the hieratic idea into the kingdom of Christ, changing it into a kingdom of priests" ("Catholicism, Roman and Anglican," pp. 174-5).

The dogma of transubstantiation was explicitly defined by the Council of Trent in the following *Canon*—"If any one shall say that in the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist there remain the substance of bread and wine together with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; and shall deny that wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body and the whole substance of the wine into the blood, the species of bread and wine alone remaining — which conversion the Catholic Church most fittingly calls transubstantiation—let him be anathema." In the same session the Council declared this dogma to have been "always the conviction of the Church of God." Protestant divines assert

that the dogma was not known before the Middle Ages, the term itself having come into use in the 11th and 12th centuries. It is enough for our purpose to know that by the 16th century the word was used, and the belief it expresses was held universally by the Church both in the East and the West.

It was from the ancient religion of Judaism that Christian Jews learnt to be sacrificial; it was from the idolatry of heathenism that the Gentile converts learnt the same lesson. Sacerdotalism was the re-instatement of the house of Aaron, the survival of paganism in the Church of Christ.

CHAPTER IV

DEPARTURE FROM THE TYPE

(2) THE MOVEMENT TOWARD CÆSARISM

THERE is an important point of similarity between Judaism and the religions of the Roman world. In both there was no recognised worship of God apart from the corporate life and official functions of the State; hence it was urged against the Christians of the first and second centuries that their religion had no national basis, it was not the religion of any government or of any particular nationality or tribe. This was urged as one of the most condemnable faults of Christianity. Its universality, in the opinion of the Romans, was both its foolishness, and its peril to the Empire; Christianity was a heresy, and therefore a provocation of the gods, who in their anger brought great floods, earthquakes, and other calamities upon the nations as punishments; hence the Empire would destroy Christianity to appease the gods. The Imperial authority was tolerant of the religions of conquered peoples if only they were old, national, and not secret. Christianity was not old, and not national. It was mistakenly thought to be secret because its followers did not join in the national religious festivals, because they met together mostly in private houses to

" sing hymns to Christ as God," and because they met in the evening. To remove any ground of suspicion on the latter point the evening service was held before sunset, and the observance of the Supper was transferred from the evening to the morning.

The Jewish nation was a Theocracy, a commonwealth governed by God, the details of the system, as well as its general principles, resting on divine authority. Judaism was first a religion, and secondarily a nation; the nation was based on the religion, and the political and religious interests were so interwoven as to be practically identical. The call of Abram was the first step in the founding of the Jewish Church by a revelation of the unity and spirituality of God, and his descendants were to be the custodians and missionaries of this knowledge—the channel of spiritual blessing to universal man. And when at the call of God he went out, not knowing whither he went, the first step was taken in founding the family, the tribe, the nation. The martyr Stephen described this people as " the Church in the wilderness " (Acts vii., 38, 44). And when they were settled in the Promised Land, the judges and prophets were to the people as the hands and voice of God: their authority lay in their divine guidance. When, afterwards, the commonwealth became discontented, and demanded a king after the manner of other nations, Samuel the prophet reasoned with them and warned them that it was not him (Samuel) they were rejecting, but God. It is the method of the moral Ruler of the World to allow the freedom of man its fullest exercise, even though it be to men's hurt, and teach them by experience what they refuse to learn by counsel. He will not be dispensed with, but will make what He can of such

diversions. So God told Samuel "in his ear"—as if whispering a secret intention—who should be king. When Samuel saw Saul God said to him—"Behold the man that I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over My people" (I. Sam. ix., 15-17). At a further point in the history the Temple was built, and the king's palace was made part of the same building, as if a part of the house of God. In other words, God allowed the kingship, and over-ruled it for the historic fulfilment of the one design running through all stages and dynasties. Through all the changes the prophet was the man between God and men; it was through him that the Theocracy asserted itself alike in the commonwealth and in the monarchy. God gave to the prophet what he would say to king or people; all recognised the prophet as emphatically the "man of God," and that gave him a moral influence which practically made him ruler. When he said—"thus saith the Lord," kings trembled on their thrones, and the people bowed before God in penitence. The Theocratic faith was maintained, and the nation and the Church were almost synonymous until the proud nation became a humiliated province.

Probably all the nations of the ancient world endeavoured thus to embody their religious emotions and convictions. In Egypt, for instance, where the fathers of the Jewish race had learned so much, the worship of Amon and his associated divinities was the state religion. The communities contiguous to Israel and surrounding the Mediterranean had their systems of priestly and national religion; references to their idols and their reverence are found in every part of the Old Testament.

So, again, in the Roman period. The Romans

themselves had their recognised national deities; they had no other conception of religion than as an affair of state. And if we turn our eyes to the non-Christian peoples of our own time we meet everywhere with the same thing—religion in alliance with the state and deriving many of its sanctions therefrom, the functions of religion being matters of tribal or imperial observance. When the Emperor of China goes to offer prayer and sacrifice in the Temple of Heaven, he does so officially, as the Father of his people and their high priest. Missionaries in China are confronted with a great practical difficulty arising out of this very fact in relation to the worship of ancestors, which is a matter of imperial law as well as immemorial custom. When missionaries encourage converts to abandon such worship, they come into collision with the law, and their appeals to foreign ambassadors to protect these converts are appeals to shield them in violating the law of their own country!

All this brings into relief the boldness and greatness of the Christian conception of a spiritual and free community. It was, and still is, Christ against the whole world, the simplicity which is in Christ against the elaborateness, the materialism, and the political alliance of religion as universally realised by the human family.

This concurrence of Jewish and pagan influence reproduced itself in the Christian Church when the conflict between the Empire and the Church ceased and the two became bosom friends. Christianity was first acknowledged as "an allowed religion," along with all the others, by the Emperor Gallienus (A.D. 261). This Emperor issued an edict from his deathbed in favour of Christianity, acknowledging the

failure of persecution as a means of changing men's ideas and of stopping their promulgation, and himself turning so far round as to request the intercessions of his Christian subjects. By the edict of Milan (A.D. 313) the faith of Christ was ordered to be universally tolerated; but it was Constantine's sons who completed the adoption of Christianity as the religion of the Court and the Empire, and this was done on at least one ground altogether creditable to the Church, viz., that the influence of the Church had been wholly favourable to personal honour and public order. Constantine's own hand in the Church's affairs is indicated in one historic incident. He received the confession of Arius, in which Arius declared his belief that the Son was born of the Father before all ages, and that, as the Word, He had made all things both in Heaven and earth. With this the Emperor was satisfied, and he instructed Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, to restore Arius to the communion of the Church, from which he had been excommunicated. Athanasius refused to restore Arius. The incident sufficiently shows that after nearly three hundred years of independence, of persecution and progress, the Church of Christ had come into a new relation to the political power, which inevitably involved interference with the Church's affairs, and more or less of political dominance in the province of religion.

The Empire was in its decline; the Church was a growing power. The alliance did not arrest the decline of the Empire, but it did inaugurate a new era in the history of the Church. The decay of the old State gave the growing Church an opportunity which, after the long strain and humiliation and suffering, appealed only too strongly to its vanity and ambition

and desire of comfort. The Pope, who had been side by side with the Emperor, himself became the papal-emperor of Rome, bishops became procurators, and priests became magistrates, who taxed the people, enforced the law by spiritual and physical penalties, and maintained unity and peace at the cost of liberty and progress. Whilst the Empire was breaking to pieces the Church remained one, and when the Empire was gone it survived in the imperial Church. "The imperial system invaded the Temple of the living God" (Dale—*Ecclesia* ii., 127). "The clergy were the Church, the Church was the religion, and the religion a transformed Roman Empire" (Fairbairn). The fall of Rome was regarded as the last and greatest triumph of Christianity. Gibbon puts that fall in another light—"Virtue had been repressed too long to admit of recovery, and the decline of genius followed the corruption of taste. A cloud of critics, compilers, commentators darkened the face of learning. . . . The Roman world was peopled by a race of pigmies when the fierce giants of the north broke in and mended the breed."

The breaking up of the Empire left the Pope master of the situation. He became the recognised head of western Christendom, and henceforth the Church is the dominant partner of political governments. The Church of Rome claims always to hold the position, not of an established Church, not of subordination to the State, nor simply as contemporary with the State, but a position of "friendly and natural relations." Cardinal Manning presents the case thus—"The union of Church and State sanctioned by the Catholic Church in all ages—the Church an independent, and in many ways a superior power and

jurisdiction. The dissolution or divorce of this union is condemned by Pius IX. as an error. This state of the law of England continued with occasional violations down to the time of Henry VIII. . . . The Catholic Church recognised by human law, but refusing to be established, independent of all authorities and sustaining the civil order of the world. This is the union of the Church and State which the Holy Father by the syllabus confirms. . . . The Church's immunity from civil laws arose from its sovereign rights derived from its Divine Head—election of its own pastors, judgment of its own members, its union with the visible head of the Church on earth" (*Essays on Religion and Literature* iii., pp. 11, 20, 23). We are thankful to have so plain a statement from a high authority familiar with England and its religious history. We accept the Cardinal's words as a *bona fide* statement, and as setting forth the claim the Church of Rome has always made of dictation in every sphere of public life. It is an enormous demand, a dominance over all the governments of the world, and in its operation in the practical politics of every State in Europe it has wrought incalculable mischief, *e.g.*, Rome sent fourteen new bishops into the Netherlands to "sustain the civil order" of Spain in governing that little but brave country. Each of these bishops was to appoint nine officers to assist in working the iniquitous and inhuman machinery of the Spanish Inquisition by which it was thought to persuade the Protestants to recant. On February 16th, 1568, a sentence of the Pope's bull condemned all the people of the Netherlands to death as heretics, and the King (Philip II., who married Queen Mary of England) ordered it to be literally carried out.

The sequel is a story of fanatical cruelty on the one hand, and of courageous fidelity to conviction on the other hand, such as finds no parallel in the history of the Church, all the more tragic, pathetic, and wicked because the destroyers as well as the victims named the name of the Prince of Peace. "Sustaining the civil order of the world" has a weird, grim significance in the light of history.

In the same article from which the above quotations are taken the Cardinal says—"A neutral impartiality and a natural equity towards all religious bodies is a policy fundamentally wise and just. . . . Relations with a just and equal civil power, detached from all religious establishments, would (thus) be possible. Now they are impossible" (pp. 32-34). We suspect these fine phrases, and the singular emphasis on toleration of *all religious bodies*, since the author says (on page 31)—"No Catholic will admit that the bodies to be disestablished are Churches," *i.e.*, there is only one Church in England, that of Rome, and when it gets the opportunity it will be its duty to assert "its superior power and jurisdiction"; the relations of "natural equity" can exist only with the one Church; when that relation is brought about it will be its duty to use the civil power for the very purpose of preventing "neutral impartiality" toward all religious bodies. So we read the past history of the Church of Rome—the Church which changeth not.

This character of the Vatican has modern as well as ancient illustrations. The Vatican had much to do in provoking the Franco-German war, which ended exactly oppositely to the intentions of Rome—in the triumph and unity of Germany, instead of the

humiliation of William I., the Protestant King of Prussia. The social-religious troubles in China of recent years have been largely due to the interference of Roman Catholic priests with local civic affairs. A promising mission in Japan has been destroyed by the same policy. The recent expulsion of religious orders from France was provoked by their interference with Governmental affairs. But the Church of Rome plays to win, and has learned the virtue of watchful waiting for new opportunities in the spirit of *nil desperandum.*

The Church in England did not come as completely under foreign power as did Continental Churches. The fortunate insularity of our country has been a strong safeguard to us in many ways. Nevertheless, even here the Papal influence was always great and constant and aggressive. The Church of Alfred's time acknowledged the Pope's over-lordship in matters of faith, and sent yearly gifts of money to Rome. But Alfred and his successors appointed to vacant bishoprics without reference to the Pope. There is no reasonable questioning of these facts—(1) That the Pope was the recognised head of the Church in this land; (2) that the Pope influenced Parliament through the King, whom he could depose; and (3) the English Parliament exercised a positive control of ecclesiastical affairs. As might be expected, there were frequent conflicts for supremacy between the Church here and the authorities in Rome; sometimes the Pope and the King disagreed, sometimes the King and the Pope combined against the Church. The change at the Reformation destroyed the possibility of the recurrence of that combination. But prior to that great

movement the Church was not free, and Parliament was not free; each was a fetter to the other, and the Pope held both ends of the cord—the political and the spiritual. Pope Innocent III. set aside a disputed election to the See of Canterbury and appointed Cardinal Stephen Langton to the position. The King (John) refused to accept Langton, and the Pope brought the full force of his judgment upon both King and people. He put the kingdom under an interdict which lasted six years, which involved the cessation throughout the land of all religious ministries save confession, baptism of infants, and giving the Sacrament to the dying. The dead lay unburied or were laid in unconsecrated ground without any religious service or ceremony. The Pope also excommunicated and deposed John, and gave his place to the King of France. The Pope conquered. John repented, and was restored as the Pope's feudal vassal, on payment of a thousand marks (shillings) yearly; and when he received his crown John laid it at the feet of the Pope's legate, taking the oath of homage to the Pope as his lord paramount. Three years after this (A.D. 1215) Magna Charta—the pledge of justice and liberty for the people—was passed, and the Pope again showed his hand by annulling it. Perhaps this was a sop to the King; more probably it was an effort, happily futile, to thwart a policy on the part of the barons, which, by limiting the King's power, made him less amenable to the Pope.

The Bishop had a place assigned to him in the legislation. This is therefore a phase of the political relation which the Church came to sustain to the State. It belongs also to the more strictly religious

and doctrinal side of the history. How came we by the Bishop, distinctively so called? From whence is the title derived and what is its significance? It is an Anglo-Saxon designation, and could not have been used here until the Saxon invasion. It had its own traditional meaning in the minds of those who first used it, and that meaning does not correspond with any title given in the New Testament. When the Saxons invaded England (A.D. 449) they were idolaters, and their high priest was designated *Biscop*. The mission of Augustine (A.D 597) was a hundred and forty-eight years after the landing of the Jutish leaders Hengist and Horsa and their Biscops; and the Saxons were converted to Christianity. But it is essential to notice that (as we have seen) the form of Christianity which converted Saxon England was already Judaised and Cæsarised; it had its reputed body of flesh and blood frequently offered on the altar; it had its priests and the superstitious beliefs attached to his acts; it had its worldly status, and its chief officers were also officers of the State and of civic bodies. They had long needed a word to express what *episcopos* had come to stand for, for they had gone far away from the humble designations of the New Testament. The Saxons had exactly the title that was needed, and it was transferred to the Church. The officers of the Church made no demur to the use of a title that had such an origin and was likely to perpetuate in new association the idea it had originally conveyed. *Episcopos* conveyed no such idea as *Biscop*. The Church was made ready and accepted the highest title of the heathenism it had supplanted. An unfortunate literary similarity made the transition more easy—episcopos—ebiscop—biscop.

Had other ideas than those of dignity, authority, and sacerdotalism prevailed at the time of the Saxon conversion, the Church would not have risked the adoption of a title which in the minds of the converts was indissolubly connected with certain ideas and functions of their former faith. They would have done wisely in following the example of the earliest Church in avoiding words which were so liable to misuse in the new faith. The Saxon Biscop was a high priest in religion; in social and political life he was of equal rank with the Alderman and the highest nobleman, inferior only to the Ætheling or Prince; the *Biscoprice* was his dominion. The religion of our pagan Saxon conquerers was a compound worship of celestial bodies and deified heroes. A *Biscop* was therefore a high priest in relation to one or more of these heavenly bodies or heroic deities, and he had a distinct and high social and political position.

That was the title, thus derived and thus significant, which the converted Saxon was encouraged to use in designating the highest functionary of the Christian Church in England. And this must have been several centuries after the New Testament age. The title is not the equivalent of any New Testament title, and the adoption of the title in preference to overseer is the gathering up, in a single word, of the great departure from Apostolic teaching and example. It helps also to explain the Parliamentary position of Bishops as an order of the realm, and also it suggests to us the origin of such phrases as "My Lord Bishop," the "enthronement of the Bishop of ——," "the Bishop's palace." The worldly state and dignity, with the large salaries necessary to their upkeep, are entirely inconsistent with, and subversive

of, the true place and influence and authority of even the highest ministers of Jesus Christ, and they mark a wide departure from the New Testament type, not merely in the externals or accidents of the ministerial office, but in the very principle and foundation of it. "The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strong holds" (II. Cor. x., 4). Notice the significance of that "but"—"Not of the flesh, but mighty," by which *flesh* is made the antithesis of *mighty;* and the history of the Church along this line is the confirmation of Paul's teaching—in proportion as the Church has employed the sword or has made the arm of flesh its trust, it has lost its true spirit, has been diverted from its true way, and has consequently failed to accomplish its true mission, *i.e.*, its moral and spiritual force has been in inverse ratio to its Cæsarism—its employment of physical force, its acceptance of political privilege.

CHAPTER V

THE SIGNIFICANT WITNESS OF MOHAMMEDANISM AND MONASTICISM

IN the long period between the Apostolic age and the Reformation there were two movements which stood out in front of all others, each testifying in its own peculiar way to the degeneracy of the Church.

(1) One of these movements was Mohammedanism. This religious system claimed to be a purified Christian faith as well as a redemption from the idolatry which Mohammed found among the Arabs. The measure of truth in this claim lies in two facts—(*a*) That Christianity had become corrupt and superstitious through its doctrine of transubstantiation and the introduction of figures and images into its worship. Mohammed recognised no difference between these symbols and the idols of Arabia, and no difference between the reverence paid to the one and the worship given to the other; and (*b*) that Mohammed was an iconoclast—a breaker of images, and the reviver of the Abrahamic spiritual worship of the one God. To Mohammed's mind Christians and Arabs were alike materialistic, and to neither of them did he allow any quarter. Statuary and paintings, especially portraits, were

denounced and destroyed as tending to idolatry. The fatal practical arguments against Moslemism are its resort to the sword in its propaganda, and its failure to regenerate its followers; it keeps the nations which accept it, or have it forced upon them, in the background of civilisation. Moslem rule everywhere means perfidy, cruelty, and degradation, notwithstanding the grains of salt it possesses. But that very character of Mohammedanism only serves to show up the enfeebled and demoralised condition into which the Christian Church had relapsed—that the hearts of men should be so ill at ease, and the moral power of Christianity so low, that such a movement as Mohammedanism should be able to fuse the chaotic and discordant tribes of Arabia into a Theocratic nation, and to displace Christianity from its first home and from all lands known as Bible lands. One of the romances of history is that the birthplace of Christianity should become a home of Islamism. And one of the most futile struggles against God's judgments on unfaithfulness is the story of the crusades of Christian monarchs to rescue the place of the Cross and Sepulchre of Christ from the Moslem. If the Church had retained its original purity and simplicity the sword of Mohammed would probably never have been raised against it, for his passion was not a hatred of mankind but of idols. And if under those different conditions his sword had still been lifted, it would have been with different result. The Church which had come through the persecuting fires of the first centuries would have come through Mohammed's fire also. But stubble is easily consumed. The victories of the Crescent are a side light of intense vividness upon the fallen state of the

Christian cause, a state in which it had lost its moral courage, a state to which it had been falling for the previous five hundred years or more. (Mohammed was born A.D. 571; in 611 he felt he was called to be a prophet.)

(2) The other phase of religious history significant of the degeneracy of the Church was within the Church itself, viz., the Puritanic movements, the extra-ethical protests against luxury and laxity, the revulsion of moral sensibility against impurity and sordidness of life, the effort of the Christian conscience and heart to realise the ideal of the Church as the body of Christ—"Holy and without blemish and unreproveable" (Colos. i., 22). Asceticism, even in the best condition of public morals and Church discipline, will always have a peculiar fascination for minds of the mystical type and minds of the morbid type. But other minds, healthier and more practical, are moved to Puritanism only by moral exigencies which involve the reputation, character, and existence of the community. It is the Puritanism of the latter order, prior to the Reformation, to which we refer, and which is sufficiently represented by the name—*Monasticism*. The distinctions of orders of monks and friars need not detain us, nor any details of the numbers of such orders. Our one point of reference to them is that their rise and rapid extension was symptomatic of the moral condition of the Church and the world. It is only too true that these orders themselves lapsed, acquiring lands and money, usurping authority and influence, and becoming morally bad; but at first they gave a pure and wholesome witness against the evils of the time. Bishops and Princes had become entangled in the world.

The state of social life became so bad that it was deemed wise and kind and virtuous not to marry and bring children into a world where they would have so poor a chance of escaping defilement. The monks and friars forming the religious houses received great benefactions, evidencing the admiration of many in the community who saw in this stricter life the one gleam of light in a dark age; but these very benefactions ultimately helped to the disgrace and destruction of the houses. Such movements have overlooked the intensity of human nature, and the fact that in Zoar, and even in the cave in the mountain side, there may be a miniature Sodom. Nevertheless, the successive companies of men who headed these movements are to be honoured for the brave protest they uttered. Their protest was significant of disease which they thought might be cured in that way. It would have been better if the Church had maintained its fidelity, and so had not needed the rebuke. The habitual and universal integrity of the community is better than the sanctity of a few in the midst of a corrupt multitude. It is darkness makes the stars visible. In the perfect world there is no night. The philanthropist always commands our affection, but the foundation of his work is laid in the social depression of the people. Arrangements for the enforcement of good government are good in the present state of society, but what a melancholy admission they are of the wickedness and cunning of men who will not do right if they have an opportunity of doing wrong. In like manner these extra-ethical movements witness to the corruption and materialism of the age; they were as breakwaters against disastrous floods of immorality; they were the instinctive yet inspired efforts which

godly men made for the preservation of morality and religion—the instinct of self-preservation in the community, analogous to the same instinct in the individual. The discouraging fact is that the forces of evil were too strong even for these bands of reformers, and one by one they sank under the evils they set out to correct.

CHAPTER VI

THE EVE OF THE REFORMATION

THE period immediately before the Reformation is compared to *a desert.* Oliver Cromwell in a few blunt sentences described the state of things—"England stands in need of a constable." "It is scandalous to hang a man for stealing a shilling or sixpence when greater crimes go unpunished." And as to the Church he said he would "put able and serious men into the pulpits." Bishop Burnet's *Pastoral Care* admirably sets forth the course of events. First, in reference to the period of the Empire—"The tottering state of the Empire . . . ought to have awakened the governors of the Church to have apprehended their approaching ruin; to have prevented it by their prayers and endeavours; and to have corrected those abuses which had provoked God and weakened and distracted both the Church and the Empire. But if we may believe Gildas here in Britain or Salvian in France, they grew rather worse, more impenitent and more insensible when they saw the judgments of God coming upon the Empire, and province after province was rent from it and over-run by the barbarians" (p. xxv.). And then, in reference to the eve of the Reformation, Burnet says—"There

was neither knowledge nor virtue enough left to reform a corruption that was becoming universal. The clergy by their disorders fell under a general contempt, . . . no part or body of the Roman clergy had credit enough to stop the progress of the Reformation which was in a great measure occasioned by the scorn and hatred that fell on them, and which was so spread over all parts of Europe that Luther's doctrine made great advances, whole kingdoms and provinces embracing it as it were all of the sudden" (p. xxvi.).

The outstanding fact is that the Church, as such, in England as elsewhere, had lost its spiritual identity and its sense of moral responsibility. The stagnation and decline of the Church were marked by three things—(1) The arrogation by the Pope and clergy of all determinative power. As their power grew greater the rights of the laity (*laos*, people) grew less. The people had been disfranchised in the very realm in which individualism and freedom most naturally find their centre and inspiration. (2) The want of an effective body in the Church, nationally and locally, by which discipline might be maintained; and (3) the attempts which were incessantly being made to extend clerical and papal dominance in the political sphere and in the individual life.

"By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. vii., 16). Guided by that rule the Church which became sacerdotal and political stands condemned, for it lost its own vitality, and it lost the respect, not to say reverence, of mankind. The question—"Did the Church act wisely in departing from the original type?" is capable of only one answer: the changes were for evil, and not good; they were not develop-

ments but excrescences; they fettered and maimed the Church in its true mission in the world; they were things to be removed rather than altered and reformed. Christianity needed a new start on its original lines, a new birth, and there were signs that the new day was at hand.

It appears as if the Reformation had dawned again and again, and yet the day did not come. (1) There was the ardent spirit of reform to which reference has already been made, asserting itself in monastic vows; in insubordination to authority which invited the disrespect of the community; and in the home missionary excursions of the Mendicant Friars. (2) Even in those dark days, when religion was so largely hidden in retreats, the cultivation of letters was encouraged by the setting up of schools in connection with the religious houses, the founding of great schools at York, Ripon, Jarrow, Whitby, Canterbury, Malmesbury, and other places, where many a rich man's son was instructed and disciplined, and many a luminous copy of the Word of God was written out, by the hand, letter by letter, in permanent black and red and gold. (3) By devotion and enterprise and generosity many a stately abbey and minster was erected for the service of God and the congregations of His people, many of which, in capacity, must have been far beyond the actual requirements of the time. (4) Wiclif is designated "the morning star of the Reformation" because of his doctrine, and because he gave the English people the Bible in the vernacular, and ultimately made it possible for every ploughboy to have in his own hand that matchless weapon against ignorance and against oppression of conscience. It was that boon which gave the Church

the intellectual quickening and moral sensitiveness which issued in the revival of learning and the reform of the Church. Wiclif completed his translation of the Scriptures in A.D. 1380, and it was so well done that no subsequent translators or revisers have been able to dispense with its aid. A hundred and fifty-one years before this (A.D. 1229) the Council of Toulouse did what the Church had never formally done before—it forbade, in definite terms, the possession of copies of the Scriptures by the common people. Another Council, after Wiclif's death, showed its disapproval of the popularising of the Bible by decreeing that his body should be exhumed and burnt: this was done, and the ashes were thrown into the Swift, the brook flowing by his old church at Lutterworth, entering the Avon, the Severn, and the sea. There is something of irony in the name of that stream—the *Swift;* and tellers of this story have not failed to see that the persecutors, in their spite, created a symbol of the universal dispersion of the truth. (5) But at that time men could only write, at best a laborious, slow, and costly method of providing literature for the people, and very few were able to write or read. These simple arts were regarded as signs of high station and superior breeding. Hence that interdict of Toulouse was aimed against the people credited with refinement and knowledge: it could not apply to *the masses*, for they were illiterate. In the providence of God the invention of printing soon followed the translation of the Bible, and that invention naturally expedited the spread of education among the people—a process which again the historic Church had no sympathy with, and did its best to hinder. The printing press was invented in the first

half of the 15th century, but whether at Mentz, Strasburg, or Haerlem is open to dispute. In A.D. 1421 a foreign printed copy of Wiclif's New Testament cost £2 16s. (about £20 present money): the largeness of the sum will be better understood when we remember that the price was considered sufficient for the support of a respectable tradesman or a yeoman or one of the inferior clergy for half-a-year! The first printing press set up in England was Caxton's, in A.D. 1471, and this was like the opening of a great sluice, through which a mighty flood of knowledge flowed to the people. Our earliest edition of the Bible was finished in A.D. 1460, and was printed abroad. Tyndall's black-letter Bible came out in A.D. 1524, Coverdale's in A.D. 1535, the Bishops' Bible in A.D. 1568. The Authorised Version of A.D. 1611 has indeed been brought to the ploughboy as Wiclif desired and anticipated, and the ploughboy is able to read it, and understand it well enough for his own furrow. The printed Bible, widely circulated, was the mightiest instrument in bringing about the Reformation; it was like letting a hungry flock into green pastures from which the shepherds had fenced them off. (6) Along with Wiclif's name and his translated Bible another anticipation of and preparation for the Reformation should be noticed, viz., the Lollard movement—a nickname of reproach attached to Wiclif and his followers. The first martyr in England by the King's command, on account of religious opinions, was a Lollard—William Sawtree, parish priest of St. Osith, London, on February 19, 1401, Henry IV. being King. The statute for burning heretics was passed in the same year; and in 1416 the Lollards were as a body proscribed by the English

Parliament. Both Sawtree and John Badby (1409) perished at the stake because they did not believe and would not teach the doctrine of transubstantiation. "After the consecration at the altar (said Badby) there remaineth material bread and the same bread which was before; notwithstanding it is a sign or sacrament of the living God, . . . if every wafer used in the Sacrament being consecrated at the altar were the Lord's body, then there would be twenty thousand gods in England." In 1395 the Lollards presented a petition to Parliament, containing the famous twelve conclusions—(1) Against temporal possessions being held by the Church, (2) against the ordination of unfit priests, the celibacy of the clergy, and all the vows of chastity, (3) against exorcism and the blessing of inanimate objects, (4) against transubstantiation, (5) against the holding of secular offices by priests, (6) against prayers for the dead, (7) against pilgrimages, (8) against image-worship, (9) against compulsory auricular confession, (10) against war, (11) against capital punishment, and (12) against such trades as fostered luxury—as those of the goldsmith and armourer. We cannot fail to see in this declaration a side description of things as they then existed, a measuring of the distance the Church had departed from Apostolic precedents, and an indication of the rise of a spirit of discontent and reform. In a book written about 1450, entitled "Repressor of Overmuch Blaming of the Clergy," we have a remarkable evidence that the Lollards anticipated not only reform but freedom. The book assailed the three chief errors of the *Biblemen*, as the author styles the Lollards; the first error being—that Christian men owe allegiance to nothing but the

law of God as stated in Holy Scripture; the second error is—that any Christian is capable of grasping its plain meaning if he be meek and willing to understand; and the third error is—that no one who has grasped the meaning of the Scriptures need listen to any clerk's interpretation from Scripture or reason, especially from reason. These *Biblemen* touched the very core of both the Reformation principle and the Free Church movement.

CHAPTER VII

THE NEW CHURCH OF ENGLAND

IN the providence of God Martin Luther's soul was lighted up by the gospel of justification by faith. His illumination was an inspiration, and the inspiration involved the Reformation. Others were helpful to the great redemption—Staupitz, who led Luther to see the truth, Elector John, who protected him, and Melancthon and Erasmus. But the movement will for ever have in front of it the name of the brave monk of Erfurt, who nailed his ninety-five *Theses* to the door of Wittenburg Church. Those *Theses* may still be seen on the same church door, but cast in iron. It is not every piece of paper that becomes metal.

Everywhere the Reformation meant one and the same thing so far as the Papacy was concerned—it meant the destruction of the Pope's dictatorship. The nations that accepted the reformed religion became free. But that does not mean that the Churches in those nations became free. Nor does it mean that those Churches were wholly purified from false doctrine. The Reformation, as such, was nowhere a Free Church movement.

What was the significance of the Reformation in England? We have pointed out the pre-reformation

anticipations of a change—(1) The translation of Holy Scripture and its wide distribution and reverent perusal, and (2) the teaching and example of the Lollards. Did the Reformation fulfil the promise of those events? Did it result in a Church which was a realisation of the original type? We can answer both questions only in the negative.

Politically.—The Church did not elect Henry VIII. as its chief in place of the Pope, it simply accepted the determination of the King himself; it ought to have resented the assumption, but it did not, which only shows how general the idea was that religion was an affair of state-craft. The incident of the King's divorce was surely not occasion enough for the change of spiritual dynasty that took place, but it was enough to rouse the King's temper. His action was not universally approved, for the Church at once divided, about equally, into Roman Catholic and Protestant. Ever since Constantine, and everywhere, the King and Parliament had constantly exercised censorship and government of the Church's affairs. The assumption of Henry would therefore not appear to be a great departure from long standing custom. To that age it would probably appear that the essential factor in those stirring transactions was not the assumption of the King, but the deposition of the Pope. To our mind the vital matter was that the King came to be in the Church what the Pope had been before—the centre of authority, the final reference in things spiritual and ecclesiastical. There was not much philosophy in this transference from Pope to King, except that the King was at hand and could be brought to book, and the Pope a long way off and not amenable to English jurisdiction. But the Pope

was primarily a spiritual authority; his political dominance was not natural to his office, and ultimately wrought his ruin so far as England was concerned. On the other hand, the King was primarily a political authority, who acquired dominance in the spiritual realm. Kingship involved less fitness for the Popedom than the Popedom involved for the Kingship. Hence it has often happened that the occupant of the throne has been an ungodly man, and yet the Church has not been free from his hand. We speak of it as a solely political and governmental question when we say that the Church did not make a good exchange in accepting the King for the Pope. It had really less liberty or autonomy than before. The King was a new order of Pope, with an accession of fixed and recognised power in governing the Church, either in the exercise of his personal authority or through the political organisation of which he was the centre and representative.

In theory the Church of England is the English nation in its religious character, the embodiment and expression of the people's faith in God. The old idea survives—that religion is an affair of the State. The position of the Church in relation to the State is thus described by one of the literary organs of the Church—"The Church acknowledges the sovereign as the supreme governor over all persons, in all causes, ecclesiastical as well as civil. This supremacy is shown in the fact that the Convocations, which form the Church's parliament, can only be convened by royal warrant, and that before they can proceed to 'decree and ordain' they must obtain 'letters of business' from the sovereign, whose ratification of their enactments is required to give them the force of

law" (*Church Bells*, Sept. 22, 1899). Yet the late Bishop of London made the astounding statement before the Church Congress at Liverpool, that the Church of England at the Reformation preserved intact the institutions of the Church and of the sacraments as they were in the Apostolic age!

Church apologists argue that the Church is governed, as regards her constitutional tenets and her discipline, by the Articles and Canons, and the law of the Church as therein contained is incumbent on the Clergy inasmuch as, at their ordination, they promise obedience to the same. But this falacious plea of self-government is being abandoned, and the admission is being frankly made that the Church cannot, of itself, make or unmake Articles or Canons or anything essential in the Church's creed or worship or discipline. Our great ecclesiastical laws and our ultimate ecclesiastical tribunals are all civil. The Act of Uniformity was passed and enforced by the civil power, and under it Dissent was a civil offence, punishable by civil and political penalties. The same external authority determined the books to be subscribed, the persons who were to subscribe, and the terms of the subscription. The practice was intelligible and logical enough on the theory that the Church and State were, though formally different, materially identical; each was the same thing viewed under a different aspect, the civil legislature being at the same time, in its own right, also the ecclesiastical (Fairbairn's *Catholicism*, p. 286).

At the end of these three hundred years this establishment of the Church remains as it was at the beginning. In the meantime the governing body has altogether changed and made the alliance more than ever unnatural, and more than ever a hindrance and

an irritation to the Church. It was the State that was not free before the Reformation; it has been the Church that has since been fettered. The following words by Cardinal Manning do not exaggerate the bondage:—"From the Courts of the Church of England an appeal lies to the Crown, whose sentence is final. . . . The corporate character of the Church is extinct . . . its chains are of gold, but chains they are. Disestablishment is for the public peace and the advantage of religion itself" (*Essays in Religion and Literature*, pp. 23, 31). The Cardinal makes another statement, in view of the new composition of Parliament and the *impasse* to which Church government has come—"The supremacy of Cæsarism is past; the supremacy of the democracy will be the next form of ecclesiastical authority."

Against all this the Free Church movement stands for the freedom of the State, as that freedom is threatened by the Roman Church's theory of Church superiority and dictatorship. And it stands for freedom of the Church, which has been lost by organic union with the State from Henry VIII. until the present time.

Doctrine and Worship.—In regard to the Reformation in doctrine and worship, in the interpretation of the Lord's Supper and its connected theory of the priesthood of the clergy, the Church had to wait many years after the abolition of the Pope's power. Five years after Henry became supreme head on earth of the Church of England, statutes were passed (A.D. 1539), known as the *Statutes of Six Articles*, the first of which was a declaration of the doctrine of transubstantiation, the denial of which was made punishable by burning. The other five articles de-

clared communion in one kind, the celibacy of the clergy, vows of chastity, private masses, and auricular confession to be agreeable to the law of God, and any who denied these propositions suffered the loss of property for the first offence and death for the second offence. The Church was thus still Romish in doctrine and worship, and lagged behind the Protestant movement on the Continent. Did it ever completely change its character? We think it did not.

The Reformation period may be said to have closed in England with the *Act of Settlement* of A.D. 1701, which fixed a Protestant succession on the throne, which required the King to declare against transubstantiation, and which required him to be in communion with the Church of England. The period began with the year 1534. In the intervening one hundred and sixty years violent currents swayed the public mind; it is enough to be reminded of the Marian reaction and persecution, of the Stuart dynasty, of the Commonwealth, and the revolution which brought William and Mary to the throne.

In that perturbed interval the English Church Prayer Book took shape, and has not since been materially altered. It bears the mark of the sharp doctrinal contention of the period of its production. Its witness is double, in the hope of securing a unity, by common acceptance of *a book*, which could not be secured by doctrinal agreement among the parties concerned. There was more desire for unity and peace than for consistency. The Prayer Book of Edward VI., with which Cranmer had mainly to do, represented the sacrament of the Supper as a memorial only, and yet it retained "the priest" just as

before, when the ordinance was held to have been a sacrifice. The error was got rid of, but the sacerdotal nomenclature was retained, which was perilous, for there is much in names and titles.

In Elizabeth's time a new edition of the Prayer Book was prepared. The Queen had leanings toward some of the Romish practices, and personally wished to bring all into the one fold. The population of the country at that time numbered four millions, and they were about equally divided between Romanism and Protestantism. The Roman half was not likely to rally round the simple "memorial." The Queen, therefore, in the new edition, retained in the Communion Service the memorial words, to please the Protestants, and she restored words which the former edition had omitted, and which had been omitted because they were understood to imply transubstantiation. These are the words—"'The body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life." This sentence the Queen urged the Romanists to accept and interpret in the sense of transubstantiation. The sentence was put in front of the words which signified "memorial"—"Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving." These words the Queen urged the Protestants to accept and interpret in the sense which harmonised with their belief. It was an attempt to unite all by a compromise; it really committed each party to the other's faith, and it failed. But those two views, facing two ways, have ever since been retained, and are used daily in the Church of England Communion service. The Papists declined to accept the compromise. The Anglicans did accept

it, with the noble exception of the body of Reformers that had sprung up within the Church, who perceived the root of future bitterness in the dual doctrine. The Ritualists have, therefore, historic ground for their contention that the Prayer Book sustains their doctrine of the sacrament, especially since "priest" is also retained. Priest and altar are necessary to each other and to the idea of a sacrifice, if words are to retain any distinctive meaning; but they are not necessary to a memorial; on the contrary, as history has shown, they are subversive of the simple memorial character of the ordinance.

It will thus be seen that the question of the sacrament is at the heart of the subject under consideration. The priest is reckoned to be more than an Apostle who is sent hither and thither to declare a message; more than a teacher who abides with the Church and explains the message; more than a prophet who stirs the slumbering conscience and tells the mind of God. He is credited with a distinct and essential function, for without him, according to the theory, there can be no spiritual efficacy and no effective sacrament. Without him there is no Church; he is the personal embodiment of the Church.

Whatever may be *our* opinion of the change from Pope to King, and of the compromise of doctrine embodied in the Prayer Book, the Reformers who lived during the transition period regarded the change with satisfaction, and contemplated with dread the possibility of a return to the old order. Those brave men parted with life rather than consent to have the Roman yoke again placed on their shoulders. When the tide of reform ebbed, they were distressed; when Papal influence became again and again dominant

they sealed with their blood the value they set upon the gain the Reformation had brought to them. Anything was better than the Papacy! The witness of these men, who stood face to face with the facts, is surely the most effective answer to the modern Churchmen who say the Reformation was a needless scare, and who would restore the anti-Reformation order of things. The letters of the Reformers, written during those terrible reactions, are extremely significant and pathetic—"Entreat the Lord continually for us in your prayers, for His Church was never placed in greater peril" (Christopher Hales, Jan. 26, 1551). In 1554 John Banks wrote of the "entire overthrow of religion in England and the fury of anti-Christ," and he entreated Henry Bullinger "to beseech the Lord that our England may at length be delivered from that tyranny of Papists by which she is now oppressed." "I see nothing," wrote Hooper, "but the death of all godliness and religion. . . . As far as true religion is concerned, idolatry is nowhere in greater vigour. Our King has destroyed the Pope, but not Popery; he has expelled all the monks and nuns and pulled down their monasteries, he has caused all their possessions to be transferred to his exchequer, and yet they are bound, even the frail female sex, by the King's command, to perpetual chastity. The impious mass, the most shameful celibacy of the clergy, the invocation of saints, auricular confession, superstitious abstinence from meats, and the teaching of purgatory, were never held by the people in greater esteem than at the present moment." This Puritan Bishop Hooper said of the doctrine of the real presence, as taught by Luther, that it was even more erroneous than transubstantiaton, that it held that

"the body of Christ was *with* the bread, and *in* the bread, and under the form of bread, and yet occupies no place!" Cranmer wrote of "our wretched and greatly ruined England." And so on and so on, chapters and volumes could be filled with the expression of their fear and lament, and also their persistence of conviction that to go back to the Pope would be a calamity, which must be prevented at any cost.

Happily the reactionary party did not ultimately hold the field. Through the cogent argument and splendid courage of the apologists and martyrs of the Reformation and of the ultra-reform movement, the judgment of the nation was arrested and its heart moved. The conflict was a fiery one, literally and metaphorically. It is disgraceful that such suffering and death were ever inflicted, but those brave men, who counted not their lives dear unto them, made modern England possible by liberating, and re-liberating, the land from the social depression, the intellectual fetters, the moral degradation, and the spiritual subservience involved in the prevalence of the Papal system. The staunch fidelity of these men, followed by the drastic work of Oliver Cromwell and the Commonwealth, decided the fate of Romanism in England. Hence, although two other Stuarts (Charles II. and James II.) came to the throne, the established Protestant Church of England made good its position, and endeavoured to realise its idea of a national Church on the three lines—(1) Regal headship instead of Papal; (2) authority centring, in the final issue, in the political power; and (3) a doctrinal compromise intended to satisfy both Papists and Protestants. We might add a fourth line—the new Church of England sought to realise its idea by a

method similar to that from which its adherents had suffered so much at the hands of the Romanists—by repressive Acts of Parliament, disabilities, expulsions, and even the infliction of bodily suffering. The idea of the Church as a national institution admitted of no Dissent; the idea of religion as also a national affair was not a matter of personal apprehension and conviction, but of uniform outward observances which were constituted tests of political loyalty to the sovereign Parliament and institutions of the country. The way to political position and office was through the Church door.

CHAPTER VIII

ORGANISED NONCONFORMITY AND PURITANISM

SUCH a settlement as that described in the previous chapter was not likely to be satisfactory to the new school of reformers which arose in this period. As they viewed the new Church of England emerging from the Reformation movement they asked themselves the question—Is this Church an adequate correction of the existing evils, an adequate reversion to the New Testament type of a Christian Church? With its kingly supremacy (no matter what the character of the King might be), and Parliamentary prerogative (no matter what the composition of the House of Commons might be); with its episcopal monarchy which left only obedience or rebellion as the part of the laity; with its dual conception of the Lord's Supper, deliberately intended to unite diametrically opposite opinions; with its position of temptation to show and vanity and corruption—is this the organic and spiritual equivalent of the Kingdom declared by its Founder to be "not of this world"? The new reformers said it was not.

That answer necessarily lead to another enquiry—"How shall we give effect to our convictions, to the

positive conception of the Church which fills and controls our mind?" Their first attempt to answer that question led them to remain within the Church and endeavour to carry its members along the path of reform and freedom. When this failed, the second step was plain and inevitable: necessity was laid upon them to band together for Christian fellowship and service. This latter process received an enormous impetus through the ill-advised zeal and determination of the Church and Parliament.

The *Act of Uniformity* required all clergymen to declare their assent to the whole Prayer Book as it then stood. It is held by some that the Act was a trap to catch the discontents, and either force them to silence or be rid of them altogether. In the issue of events it was found to be easier to be rid of men than to silence them. In that memorable year (1662) it was found that there were two thousand of the clergy who preferred to accept disqualification through the Act rather than give a mere formal assent to what they most strongly disagreed with. They paid the price of their honesty and were ejected from their churches, and in many instances from their homes.

Eighty-two years before this, however, about A.D. 1580, when Elizabeth was Queen, a Church had been formed by Robert Browne, on the principle laid down in his pamphlet entitled *Reformation without tarrying for any.* Patience was apparently being lost at the slow progress of ultra-reform in the Church. Browne taught a doctrine of the Church which to the Churchmen of that day would appear revolutionary and false. The reader may judge for himself whether the doctrine was contrary to the New Testament or contrary to the traditional teaching and practice of

the 16th century. Browne contended that the Church as a whole was the proper and only efficient authority in purifying religion; not the King, nor the Parliament, nor the bishops, nor all the people in a parish, for, said he, "the Church does not consist of all the people in a parish, but rather of the worthiest, how few soever they may be." This is his definition of a Church—"Any company of Christians who covenant with God and each other to walk according to the teachings of Jesus Christ, and to engage in His service and His worship, and who observe the sacraments, is a true Church, and is independent of all control but that of the Divine Head of the Church." This was the principle on which Browne's Church was founded. Many other similar Churches were formed—a noticeable and not a negligible quantity, and their adherents were known as Brownists, Separatists, Congregationalists.

The ejectment of two thousand clergymen in A.D. 1662 very greatly increased the force of the "Brownist" movement. Twenty-five years after this (A.D. 1687) James II. made the "declaration of indulgence," allowing the Dissenters to hold their services openly. By that time *Independents* had come to be the common name by which Nonconformists were designated, originating probably in A.D. 1616, when Henry Jacob came from John Robinson's Church at Leyden to form an *Independent* Church in London.

Three opinions are held as to the earliest English Nonconformity. (1) Skeat, in his "History of the Free Churches," says Richard Hooper was the first Nonconformist. But that can mean only *in opinion*, since Hooper remained in the Church, a courageous advocate of reform, and was Bishop of Gloucester

when he was martyred in 1555. (2) In Powicke's "Life of Barrow" it is argued that Barrow was the real founder of Nonconformity. Barrow would be a far more heroic founder than Browne, since he suffered martyrdom (A.D. 1593) along with Greenwood and Penry. (3) As early as 1555 there is said to have been a separated congregation, probably of Puritans; and in 1568 Richard Fitz was pastor of a similar company. The Spanish Ambassador wrote (A.D. 1568) to his master, Philip II. of infamous memory—"Those who call themselves of the *religio purissima* go on increasing. They are styled Puritans because they allow no ceremonies, nor any forms save those which are authorised by the bare letter of the Gospel. They will not come to the Churches which are used by the rest, nor will they allow their ministers to use any marked or distinctive dress. Some of them have been taken up; but they have no fear of prison" (Handley, "What England owes to Puritanism"). In 1572 we are also told of a Presbyterian Church at Wandsworth. These were fugitive efforts, anticipations of the organised movement, just as there had been anticipations of the Reformation. There had probably been many such, most of them meeting the fate of the Wandsworth congregation, which was "silenced" in that year (1572), or of Fitz's Church, which was bodily cast into Bridewell Prison. So far as history assures us, the formation of that Church in Norwich, with Robert Browne himself as its minister, was the parting of the ways, the water-shed of the Free Protestant movement in England—the political Churchmen continuing in their way, the Free Churchmen there and then inaugurating a new development of

religious ideas which they held to be a restoration of the original, the New Testament type, and which was the real beginning of the Free Church movement which has continued until the present day.

We have spoken of English Nonconformity as it originated in a distinct severance from the Established Church, and we have accepted the date of Browne's Church (1580) as marking the commencement of organised Nonconformity. But for more than a hundred years there had been in England a branch of the Bohemian *Unitas Fratrum*, known among us as the Moravians. There was also a "Baptist" Mission attributed to the Albigenses, which came into notice in the time of Henry VIII. for the simple reason that they had hitherto been considered a negligible quantity, but now were perceived to be in entire accord with the Nonconformists, and were henceforth reckoned with them, and made to suffer with them also. But these Free Churches were not products of the movement we are tracing; they were mission churches from other lands and antedated Nonconformity ere there was a *Uniformity Act* to dissent from.

Some of the ejected ministers afterwards conformed and were restored. Others held aloof, trusting to time to open a way of re-union. Many neither returned nor waited, but at once found doors ready open for them in Free Churches. Whether all these men were in principle Free Churchmen or not they learnt by enforced experience that the political alliance of the Church was not necessary either to personal piety or to the reality of Church life. They still found that divine grace was given to them. Cast out from the old home, they naturally

founded for themselves another. Their order of worship might be regarded bare as the very walls of their meeting-houses, but God's blessing rested in the new assemby.

Although the new Anglican Church had itself broken loose from the Roman Church, it seemed not to occur to its leaders that their example might be carried still further with good effect. If they could say they were not a new Church but only the old true Church recovered, so the ultra-reformers might say they only recovered the still older and truer Church of Apostolic times. The State Church kept the old buildings; the Free Church had to build new ones for itself. This difference does not affect what is essential. No one thinks the casket and the jewel are the same.

The Established Church was certainly rid of a troublesome element, although not rid of its trouble, as its history has shown, but all must feel how great must have been the impoverishment of the Church by the loss of so large and so vital a force. The actual number of disaffected clergy must have staggered the Conformists. In education and social rank they were on a par with their pursuers. In spirituality and moral force they were among the most earnest, for they were to a great extent the Puritan element which for a hundred years had been growing in the Church.

Three courses lay before the ejected ministers—(1) A penitent return to the fold; (2) spiritual isolation and starvation, and (3) the formation of a new fellowship. With Free Churches already in existence the possibility of the latter course being taken might have suggested itself to the official minds. But they were either blinded that they could not see or

hardened that they did not care. The third course was the one which the great body of ejected ministers did follow, and with them went a large number of sympathetic laymen of all ranks of society. Henceforth the Free Church movement takes its stand by the side of the State Church, as a protesting Church, but working out its own positive principles of personal religion and Church life.

Puritanism was a distinct feature of the history we are now considering, and is not to be confounded either with the Reformation or the Free Church movement, although it grew out of the ethical spirit of the former, and found a natural alliance for itself with the latter. There were many Puritans who were staunch Establishmentarians, and there were many Nonconformists who were not of the Puritan party. Hence, even after the ejection of the two thousand, an important element of Puritanism remained in the State Church, identified with the Evangelical party; and we may gladly admit that that element has never been absent from the Episcopal Church. Free Churchism and Puritanism were parallel movements in the one Church during a period of about a hundred years. The plot of the *Act of Uniformity* was directed against both movements, and assisted greatly in bringing the two closer together. When the two forces became virtually united it would be impossible to say; and the union was effected, not by any formal compact, or enactment, but by their natural affinity of idea and sentiment, and by the fiery trial of persecution which drew them together in the bond of common suffering and fellowship.

It was about the year A.D. 1564 (Queen Elizabeth) that the term Puritan was used to describe these

Reformers—sixteen years prior to the formation of Robert Browne's Church at Norwich. At what particular date the party itself appeared cannot be told. It was probably the survival or revival of Lollardism. The Puritans were members of the Established Church, and sought to effect reform through Convocation and Parliament. Their motto, *Religio purissima*, naturally suggested the honourable bye-name which their opponents fastened upon them. Their aim was to purify the worship and doctrine of the Church from the Romish character which they said still clung to it. In pursuit of their central purpose they objected to the wearing of ecclesiastical vestments, to the sign of the Cross in baptism, to kneeling at Communion, to bowing at the utterance of the name of Jesus, to the giving of the ring in marriage, and in the later years of the movement to the episcopal form of Church government. Elizabeth was bitterly opposed to these men; but members of her own Privy Council (as Cecil and Leicester) supported them. Their contention was not against mere formalities which meant nothing, but against ideas and principles involved and understood. When they refused to make the sign of the Cross at baptism, they repudiated, at the initial stage, the superstition of baptismal regeneration; when they laid the surplice aside they insisted upon the spiritual equality of the layman and the preacher; and when they declined to kneel at the Communion they declared that there was no altar, no bodily presence of Christ, and that the minister was not a priest.

Puritanism meant also a strict personal morality and unworldliness. The moral laxity of the age provoked them to rigidity. In clothing, in speech, in

business, in amusements, in regard to social virtue, they followed not the multitude. They were possessed of a high degree of moral courage and dared to be considered singular and angular. The charge of moroseness is not justly made against them: they enjoyed life and were as gifted with the sense of humour as the generality of mankind—many of the sermons of the Puritan divines being evidence of the fact. There were probably ridiculous examples of the class, giving some reason to the criticism that they were extreme and fanatical. It would have been a unique fact in the history of impassioned movements if there had been no foolish and extravagant Puritans. On the principle of judging a cause by its weakest examples there has never been a great work that would stand uncondemned—even the Christian Church itself could not have stood against the ignorance and uncharitableness and corruption of many of its exponents. Those who wish to disparage the Reformation will, of course, laugh at the Puritans while they shut out of view such men as John Howe, John Milton, Richard Baxter, Cranmer, Hooper, Latimer, and Ridley.

As a movement for carrying the reform of the Church to its proper and only logical conclusion, Puritanism failed, for the Prayer Book and ceremonies and doctrines of the Church were not affected by the protest. In A.D. 1604 the King called a Conference at Hampton Court to consider what changes might be made in the Prayer Book so as to make it acceptable to all parties, but with no useful result. A recent Church writer expresses the judgment that the Puritans on that occasion were treated as "vanquished and disinherited" by men who were "more disposed

for retaliation than for unity" (Dr. Hunt, "Church Past and Present," p. 148).

But the men, the Puritans, were not failures; nor has their influence failed. If we consider the ideal of religion they strove to realise, and the ideal of personal character which they upheld, we shall attribute no failure to them, but shall be disposed to endorse Macaulay's testimony—"The Puritans were the most remarkable body of men, perhaps, which the world has ever produced": or the words of J. R. Green ("History of the English People")—"Great as were the faults of Puritanism, it may fairly claim to be the first political system which recognised the grandeur of the people. . . . The whole history of English progress since the Restoration, on its moral and spiritual sides, has been the history of Puritanism." If the old Church had retained the full force of the Puritan party, and had responded to its appeal, we should have had no story of a rival movement to narrate.

The Puritans in the Church came to see the hopelessness of their task. Three years after the great ejectment, the Court of High Commission was revived expressly to enforce the ecclesiastical laws of the realm. By its inquisition hundreds more of the most faithful ministers in the land were driven from their pulpits. The Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, was sent to prison because he refused to wear the required vestments; and in the same year all the London clergy were asked to promise to conform to all things in the Prayer Book, and, for declining to do so, thirty-seven out of the ninety-eight were first suspended, and then deprived of their livings. These Puritan clergymen naturally continued to teach those of their flocks

who sided with them, and for this purpose they conducted worship in halls, in private houses, running the risk of fine and imprisonment for their irregularity. Thus were the numbers of the Free Churches increased, and the men found a liberty and joy they had not sought. Thus the Church refused Puritanism as it had refused to be free; and it cast out the Puritans as it had cast out the Free Churchmen.

There was a Providence in the judicial blindness which had come over the vision of the Church. As the Church had re-shaped itself, after the manner we have described in a previous chapter, there was as much peril to the purity and spirituality of the Church as there had ever been, and, to save religion, God broke up the Church, as at Babel he saved the race by dividing the nation, and as He broke up the Empire to save Europe. Such convictions and hopes as those which actuated the Nonconformists and Puritans were not born to die again. The first door may be closed, the first hope may fail, yet the witness shall not fail, but find befitting embodiment and do the work which the old Church should have done, and would have done had she cared less about external things, and had displayed more confidence and courage in resting upon her purely spiritual character and function.

The coalition of Free Churchism and Puritanism had a moral effect too important to escape notice. There not only came to be in England a Church Established and Churches not established, but these two terms represented, generally speaking, two cults or types of religion ethically considered. "The Nonconformist Conscience" is a phrase of recent coining. What the phrase stands for is as old as Puritanism.

The modern phrase witnesses to the fact that the old Puritan spirit is not yet dead. We do not say that one cult is wiser, loftier, holier than the other. There have been saints in each and sinners in both. Nevertheless it is true that, taken as two bodies of men, they are actuated by moral sentiments that often lead them in opposite directions: they view things as from different standpoints. The difference may not be exactly definable, yet it affects their attitude on questions of national righteousness, of social custom, and personal habits. Freedom of conscience and of Church life has somehow resulted in greater strictness; emphasis of the inwardness of religion has somehow made the Church feel that it has a claim to judgment of the outward conduct of its members. Hence the development in all Free Churches of a system of discipline which takes cognisance of personal reputation, and helps to keep the Churches pure.

State patronage, the wearing of official State livery, the holding of special social and political privileges, the prospect of positions of dignity and emolument—all this has produced a sense and air of importance and superiority, destructive of fellowship and co-operation. On the other hand, the necessity of paying their own way and trusting to themselves, the absence of worldly grandeur, and the frequent experience of disadvantage and wrong—all this has had a disciplinary effect and has made for vigour; and if sometimes this has exposed Dissent to the charge of "Philistinism" it has proved itself favourable to backbone and business. The Church of England at the Reformation made no attempt to secure for itself autonomy, not even in the matter of

dealing promptly and effectively with abuses: it handed everything over to the King and Civil courts. Hence the "Governmental paralysis" which Doctor Gore said afflicted the Church, but through which the Doctor himself became Bishop of Worcester.

It was at that juncture, when the State Church threw away its opportunity of freedom and self-government, that the Free Church movement began, and gained for itself a fixed place in the religious life of the nation, possessing within itself, and exercising of its own right, the power of rectification of abuses, and of adapting its methods to changing times and conditions. Such a Church suffers nothing by comparison with a Church bound hand and foot, and whose ultimate weapon is process of civil law and appeal to the King. And if we ask again—Along which line has the New Testament idea of religion its fullest development and clearest expression? only one answer seems to be reasonable and possible—the men who began the Free Church movement were moved by God; they picked up the lost thread, which their successors are under a solemn obligation never to allow to be lost again.

CHAPTER IX

THE TRAGIC IN CHURCH HISTORY

IT was perfectly consistent with its political relations that the Church should use Acts of Parliament, and the force behind them, to secure the outward unity which was considered essential, and which Dissent did certainly destroy. Grant the premise that a state Church is the only legitimate form of religion and one of two conclusions is inevitable—(1) All must be made to conform or (2) Dissent must be regarded as not a Church. The first of these was the position taken in the period now under consideration. And since compulsion failed, disparagement and neglect (the second course) have been the policy by which to discredit and destroy Dissent. That is to say, Dissent is at first too important a movement to be allowed, and then it is not important enough to be recognised. Both ways the policy of the Church has been a mistake and has failed, a conspicuous instance of the fatal effects of a false idea. We may therefore, at this point, briefly review the legislation which was directed against the Free Churchmen, by which it was hoped to repress the movement and maintain the outward unity of the Church. It should also be remembered that the Roman Catholics were then in the position of a Free

Church, and came within the sweep of the same repressive policy.

The *Statutes of Six Articles* (A.D. 1539—Hen. VIII.) have already come under our notice, with their penalties of loss of property and life (*vide* Chapter VII). Ten years later (Edward VI.) the first *Act of Uniformity* of Divine Worship was passed although the Statutes of Six Articles were intended to secure the same end and were still in force. Four years later (A.D. 1553) Mary restored the Popish system, and turned the machinery of repression against those who had created it. But six years after this (A.D. 1559) Elizabeth was Queen, and Parliament reinstated Protestantism and passed another *Act of Uniformity* and an *Act of Supremacy*, the Dissenters being the victims of extremely severe penalties. Driven by the hardships inflicted upon them, many found refuge in Switzerland and Holland, where they became yet more powerfully indoctrinated with the principles they already held, to return to their own land at a later time more valiant Free Churchmen than ever.

The Stuart dynasty will ever be infamous. With the name of Charles I. will be linked Archbishop Laud and Earl Strafford, who together, and by means of *Star Chamber*, *High Commission Court*, and other arbitrary methods brought the nation to a state of frenzy and desperation. Happily for England our history has not often had to record the arraignment and execution of its King for "high treason against the people." It was in this period that the Pilgrim Fathers escaped from the cruel intolerance of the Church and emigrated (A.D. 1620) to New England, where they founded the American Republic

and the free American Church, both republic and Church being built upon free speech, liberty of conscience, and equality of opportunity. In A.D. 1660 Charles II. sent to the Convention Parliament a *Declaration from Breda*, which provided that on his restoration no man should be disquieted for differences of opinion in religion that did not disturb the peace of the kingdom. This seemed full of hope. But during his reign the four Acts known as the *Clarendon Code* were passed—(1) *The Corporation Act* (A.D. 1661), which required all persons holding office in municipal corporations to take the Lord's Supper in the parish church; (2) a third *Act of Uniformity* (A.D. 1662), which required all clergymen to declare their assent to everything in the Prayer Book. It is written to the credit of the bishops present at the passing of the Act that they voted against it. This was the Act which occasioned the refusal and ejection of the brave two thousand; (3) The *Conventicle Act* (A.D. 1664) declared all meetings of more than five persons, besides the members of the household, for religious worship not according to the Prayer Book, to be seditious. All persons above sixteen years of age who attended such services contrary to the Act were, for the first offence, fined or imprisoned for three months; for the second offence fined, or imprisoned for six months, and for a third offence were transported for seven years; (4) The *Five Mile Act* (A.D. 1665) required all Dissenting ministers to take an oath similar to that imposed by the Corporation Act, to renounce the Solemn League and Covenant, and to swear that they believed it to be unlawful to take up arms, upon any pretence whatever, against the King. In case they refused, they

were not to come within five miles of any borough or place where they had ever preached, nor to act as schoolmasters, under a penalty of £40 and six months imprisonment. In such ways it was hoped to deter men from being Nonconformists, and to make the existence of a Free Church an impossibility. After seven years of operation of the *Clarendon Code* the King issued a declaration of indulgence to Catholics and Dissenters; he was even willing to declare himself a Catholic, though he never dared to do so, but in the next year Parliament brought pressure to bear upon him and he withdrew the indulgence. That same year (1673) saw the *Test Act* passed, which provided that all officers of the Crown should take the oath of allegiance and supremacy, observe the sacrament according to the Church of England, and declare their disbelief in transubstantiation.

A welcome diversion from this course of legislation may be noted. In A.D. 1677 the Statute for the burning of heretics was repealed, and ten years after, another declaration of indulgence was issued, allowing Catholics and Protestant dissenters to perform their religious services, but leaving on the Statute Book the other measures of repression and disqualification—an entail which succeeding generations of Free Churchmen have successfully contended against. The revolution of A.D. 1688 brought William and Mary to a joint occupancy of the throne, and the year after this saw the *Bill of Rights*, which was virtually a renewal of *Magna Charta*. That year, also, the *Toleration Act* was passed, which gave freedom of worship, and liberty to ministers to conduct the same, free from the laws of Elizabeth which compelled attendance at the parish church. This Act required Dissenters to take

an oath against Papal rule and authority; the place of their meeting must be left unlocked, unbarred, unbolted; they must still pay tithes or other parochial dues; their preachers must be registered or licensed, and pay a fee of sixpence for the registration; the Dissenting chapel must be certified by the bishop of the diocese, his archdeacon, or by a justice of the peace. So slowly, reluctantly, and with so much fencing did the idea give way that the Dissenter was a dangerous person. The Dissenters as a body received the Act with a measure of gladness. The most dissatisfied among them were the Quakers, who then and afterwards denounced tithes and Church rates and all compulsory exactions for the support of religion. They suffered the spoiling of their goods in their antagonism to what they described as "Steeple-house rates and lays." From A.D. 1681 to 1857 the number of persons imprisoned for non-payment of these exactions averaged about a hundred a year, and the goods seized to about £4000. There was verily occasion for John Locke's appeal to the conscience of the persecutors when he asked them whether they were showing the benignity and meekness which were the first marks of a true Church, whether they persecuted out of friendship and kindness, whether they dealt with members of their own Communion who were guilty of all manner of vices, as they had dealt with godly Nonconformists? "Let such," said he, "talk ever so much of the Church, they plainly demonstrate that it is another kingdom they aim at, and not the advancement of the Kingdom of God." "The real schismatics," Locke argued, "are not the men who separate from an established religion, but the men who, professing that religion, violate by

their want of charity, and by their carnal desire for supremacy, the precepts and spirit of Christianity" (Skeat's "*History of Free Churches*," pp. 134-6).

It will be noticed, however, that the *Toleration Act* did negative past Acts, so far as their object was to extinguish Dissent, and it gave Dissent a legal and social standing. "The right of all persons to think for themselves in matters of religion was now finally recognised by the law of England, but those who chose to exercise that right were deprived of a portion of their civil privileges." By statute it was confessed that Dissent could not be repressed, and yet that Dissenters were persons to be suspected.

It is painful and humiliating to notice how the spirit of disdain toward those who conscientiously differ in opinion has marked even the history of religion. As long as that spirit has been content with calling hard names—names which expressed contempt or provoked laughter, it mattered little, though many a good thing has been laughed into oblivion. Only the fittest have survived, and then the name of reproach has become a term of respect and honour. Those of "the way" were first called Christians at Antioch, the third city of the Empire in rank (after Rome and Alexandria), and famous for the wit of its people in giving bye-names. In the days of the Empire the Christians themselves were denounced and despised as heretics, the orthodox community being the heathen idolaters. And in later centuries Lollard, Puritan, Separatist, Methodist were all satirical epithets. But words break no bones, though they have power to break weak men's resolutions.

The pathetic and tragic phase is reached when disdain becomes inhuman and stays not short of

physical torture. It is scarcely realisable by us now, that persons of pure life and honourable dealings should lose their lives by burning, decapitation, hanging, and other violent and diabolic methods, because of conscientious differences in religious opinion. Yet so it has ever been, the story of freedom of conscience, of reform, and of revival, has been a story of opposition, of suffering, and martyrdom.

The Church of the first three centuries passed through the fire of the Emperors, who recognised it as a primary part of their duty to defend the gods! Although it could only be said against the Christians that they refused to worship the local idol or deified Emperors (from Augustus), and held aloof from the common amusements and customs associated with idolatry, and lived lives of purity and seriousness, they (many of them) paid the price with their lives. "I am a Christian, and there is no evil done among us," said Blandina—the slave girl who was slain by the hand of man because the lions crouched away from her and the wild cow would not molest her. Polycarp, a disciple of the Apostle John, closed the question of recantation or death by the tender confession—"Four score and six years have I served Him and He never did me wrong; how then can I revile my King and Saviour?" "Welcome nails and cross," said Ignatius, "welcome broken bones, violence, and fierce beasts, wounded limbs and broken body! welcome all diabolic torture if I may but obtain Christ." Great men like Cyprian, wealthy people like Perpetua, slave girls like Felicitas, alike perished—the lady and slave together—"I cannot call myself other than I am, a Christian," was the final witness of Perpetua. Somehow it does not strike us as unlikely that Christians

should suffer at the hands of ungodly men or of superstitious idolators. The Church was given to expect tribulation (as the grain on the threshing floor might expect the flail). Christ said His followers would be hated by "the world," in the light of which it is an evil sign when the soldiers of the Cross go aside or bate their witness so as to make their work agreeable to the feelings of the world.

The most extraordinary and distressing perplexity arises in our mind when we find the Christian Church itself using the sword which it had wrested from the hand of its foe. In this respect it copied the imperial example which it had so strenuously and successfully opposed, and itself became a persecutor, with this difference, which only made matters worse, that its violence was directed against believers in the same God and Lord, whose lives were at least as pure as those of their pursuers, whose opinions created no social wrong or political peril. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another" (John xiii., 35). One wonders what the worldly men of the day thought of a religion which seemed to allow Christian to kill Christian for the difference of a preposition (*with* or *in* the bread). It is a historic monument of folly and inhumanity, the profession of piety notwithstanding, that the Church has killed its prophets and stoned its Apostles. The martyrdom of Ridley, Latimer, Cranmer, Hooper, and a host of others has recoiled, and is the standing condemnation of the Roman Church. Earl Strafford said he wished such men as these were "well whipped into their senses."

It was the same evil spirit which made the Anglican Church a persecuting Church which took

three graduates of Cambridge—Barrowe, Greenwood, and Penry—to the gallows in A.D. 1593 (Elizabeth Queen) for their Free Church principles, to say nothing of the thousands of others who were "greatly distressed through imprisonment and other great troubles." These are as the blood marks on the hand of Macbeth, which he could not wash off—

> "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
> Clean from my hand? No; this, my hand, will rather
> The multitudinous seas incarnardine,
> Making the green—one red."
>
> (*Macbeth*, Act II.—Scene 2.)

Fines, imprisonments, disfranchisements, and ignominious pillories were small and refined cruelties in comparison with some of the barbarities inflicted in the name of religion. Poor Prynne was surely one of the most unfortunate. By profession he was a barrister, by manner of life a Puritan. For writing against theatres he was expelled from the university and the Bar; he was fined £5000 twice over, was put into the pillory, was branded in the cheek, had his ears first cut off, and then the very stumps of them dug out. He was imprisoned for life, and martyrdom consummated his confession. A few years after, George Fox—"honest George"—began to preach his doctrine of the inward illumination of Christian believers; a thousand of his followers were (at one time) imprisoned for their consistent adhesion to their principles.

Time has a way of transforming crosses into crowns, curses into benediction—not, of course, the mere revolutions of the clock and of the sun, but the workings of Divine providence through human experience. The names of the

heroic souls who dared to suffer and die, but would not be recreant to their faith, are names that will never perish. It is not the fire which consumed their bodies which has sent down to these ages its lurid and horrid light, but the faith and courage and loyalty to truth which the flames could not touch —as truly a proof of the care of God as the instance of the three Hebrews whose hozen had not the smell of fire upon it when they were taken out of the furnace. It is the virtue of the noble sufferers that shines on and on, lighting up the way of duty for all brave souls in all great crises of the history of their Church.

Certain names stand out conspicuously in the pages of history. How many others there were, equally brave and worthy, can never be known by us. In the year that Cranmer died (A.D. 1556) we are told it was impossible to keep a record of the names, or of the aggregate number, of those who suffered the extreme penalty. The slaying of men was a familiar sight to which the Church grew hardened. "I am in fear," said Cranmer, "and not without reason, of these perfidious bishops, to whom nothing is more acceptable than the spilling of the blood of the godly."

In A.D. 1742 a Dissenter was elected to the office of Sheriff of the City of London. He had not sought the office, and knew he was legally disqualified because he did not take the Sacrament in the Established Church. The corporation which elected him also knew this. A bye-law of the corporation imposed a fine of £400 upon any person who, having been nominated for the office, declined to stand, and a further fine of £600 upon any person who, having been elected, refused to serve. The money thus

shamefully exacted was devoted to the fund for building the new Mansion House! It was found to be a quick and easy way of getting the money. As the office became vacant the city fathers elected a man known to be unable, on conscientious grounds, to serve. This process of robbery went on for six years, by which time £15,000 had accumulated for the Mansion House! But in A.D. 1754 three dissenters, Steafe, Streatfield, and Evans, were successively elected to the office, and on the advice of the Dissenting Deputies they refused both to serve and to pay. The case went from Court to Court, and finally the House of Lords, by six votes to one, decided against the corporation.

One of the grandest manifestos the world has known of fidelity to conscience was when the two two-thousand Nonconforming clergymen were ejected from their livings on August 24th, 1662. It was Bartholomew's Day, a saint's day of the Roman Church, made for ever memorable and monitorial by the massacre, on that anniversary in 1572, of French Huguenots, when 4000 Protestants in Paris, and 30,000 throughout France, suffered instant and cruel death—a horrible act of heartlessness which the Pope regarded as a triumph, for he celebrated the event by a procession to the Church of St. Louis, the singing of a grand Te Deum, the striking of a commemorative medal, and the proclamation of a year of jubilee. This perversion of judgment is paralleled only by the malignant feeling with which Philip II. of Spain pursued the Hollanders, and when, in one night, the Zuyder Zee subsided with 100,000 unwarned people it was interpreted as a judgment of God upon their struggles for freedom. "Let every man look to it in

future," said the Duke of Alva in 1567, "for his majesty would rather the whole land should become a wilderness than that a single dissenter should exist within its territory."

That day of Bartholomew, ninety years after the massacre, the English Church and Parliament selected as the day when the *Act of Uniformity* should take effect for the purging of the Church of its dissentients, when those two thousand clergymen went out, not knowing whither, many of them to want and hardship, but all knowing that their one duty was to stand by the truth. The Church that day inflicted upon itself a wound which will not be healed until that Church repudiates the false idea out of which such mistaken policy and inhuman persecution sprang. It inherited from the old Church the idea of unity by uniformity and the duty of the State to enforce it upon all people as an element of national loyalty.

Why repeat such a story of mistaken zeal and uncalled for bitterness? Because we are in constant danger of the nation going back to that false idea. That danger will continue as long as the Roman Church retains its traditional spirit, and as long as the Anglican Church is "established," and grasps at a supremacy which it does not gain purely by its character and work.

CHAPTER X

THE RATIONALE OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

A BRIEF and separate chapter may well be given to the question—What is the rationale of religious persecution? We cannot think of the persecutors as being influenced only by feelings of coarse brutality —as when slaves were thrown to the wild beasts solely that the ferocious passion of the courtiers might be gratified by the horrid contest. In religious persecution there must surely be another reason, poor enough it may be, but nevertheless better than mere brute passion.

The persecutors doubtless shared the estimate of the cheapness of life which has invariably characterised low stages of civilisation, and which Christianity has had greater difficulty in correcting than the twin evil of slavery. Hence, whilst slavery is abolished, Christian nations still resort to war, as if that settled the reason of a quarrel. The Christian sentiment ought to have raised the Church above killing a man for an idea. But it did not. And so far Christianity did no more to humanise men than Paganism or Judaism had done.

What was the point of view which made men

believe they did God service in killing the prophets? It is only an aggravation of the evil that intolerance has been so universal a factor in the history of religion, and has been accompanied by protestations of piety, *e.g.*, Saul of Tarsus, as touching the law blameless, haled to prison and death harmless, good-living people of the new way, thinking all the while that he did God service. He subsequently acknowledged his error, but his acknowledgement is a condemnation of all who attempt to compel agreement by killing the body. He did it *ignorantly*, he said. Charles V. of Spain, whose victims through the Inquisition numbered 50,000 people, heard a sermon a week, ate no meat in Lent, made confession once a quarter, and attended Mass every day. The fires of Smithfield and Oxford did not seem at all incongruous with the Te Deum of St. Paul's Cathedral or Christ's Church. With delightful simplicity the Ameer of Afghanistan (A.D. 1901) says of his own people—"If anyone will not repeat the five prayers he is lashed until he does. For you see, a nation which is not religious becomes demoralised, and misbehaviour makes people unhappy in this world and the next."

The conduct of the religious persecutor is a lurid illustration of the fatal effect of a false idea. For good or ill the best intentions of men do not redeem their follies, nor prevent disastrous consequences. "I meant only good," has not prevented the terrible social effects of the grocers' liquor licences. The false idea that actuated the persecutors of the Reformation and Free Church period was that religion was not an affair of private judgment and individual responsibility but of external conformity; the Church was the unit, not the individual believer,

and, of course, the unit must be made self-consistent. Bibles were burnt and the faithful forbidden to read them or to possess them, not because the Bible was not fit to be read but because the lay mind was incapable of reading it without error. The Church alone could interpret it, and the faithful must accept without question. And when the reformed Church of England displaced the old, and accepted the political rule in place of the papal, religion became a department of the State: the Church was but the nation in its religious character, and all must fall into line.

As thus viewed, religion, as by law established, was the basis of citizenship, and must be uniform. Citizenship, on the principle of any man choosing his own (religious) qualification for franchise or office, would, of course, soon bring about political chaos. Religion was the foundation of office, the one guarantee of honour; but of what value was that unless there existed a recognised standard of religious observance to which all should conform. How much simpler and easier things became when all that men had to do was to conform! And how much quicker the process of converting the nation and bringing about the millenium, when, instead of the laborious, slow, and often disappointing process of education and personal conviction, the end could be reached by conformity!

Fix that false idea as the working principle, and then it is easy enough to understand why idolatrous Romans should cast Christians to the lions, why Christian Romans should cast Protestants to the fires, and why Protestant Christians should imprison, impoverish, and hang Dissenters. In their eyes martyr-

doms were vindications of the true faith and of the unity and authority necessary to the well-being of the nation. Thus Dissent became treason, and tests and punishments naturally follow in order to secure obedience and unity. Grant the premiss, and the conclusion is logical. The only alternatives then are—(1) Compulsory conformity, or (2) exclusion from public life. The standing wonder is how the adoption of that working principle could ever have been possible with the New Testament in hand. But, the principle once adopted, the whole machinery of the State may consistently be employed to enforce it. The lesson was not learned from Christ, nor from the Apostles, nor from the early Church. "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbade him because he followeth not us." "Forbid him not," replied the Master. "Let us call down fire from Heaven to consume them" (the Samaritan villagers) said the impetuous disciples. "Ye know not what spirit ye are of," said the Teacher, who came to instruct and not to kill. The evil lesson was learned from heathenism and the Empire.

Thus again is thrown into bold relief the greatness and the courageousness of the New Testament conception of the Church and of religion, a conception which would be an innovation wherever it was introduced, a gospel of ecclesiasticism which "all the world" needed—spiritual and autonomic as distinguished from outwardness and outward authority. The false idea which made the Church a persecutor is the antithesis of the New Testament idea.

CHAPTER XI

THE FREE CHURCHMEN CHALLENGED THE FALSE IDEA

WERE the ultra-reformers of the 16th century right in departing from the precedents of ancient Judaism and of heathen nations in regard to the establishment of religion by law and force? Did Jesus Christ contemplate the union of His Church with the kings and parliaments of the nations where His truth prevailed? Is such union consistent with His teaching, His example, and the essential nature and character of His Church? Is the establishment of religion favourable or otherwise to the true life of the Church itself and promotive of personal religion of a people?

The Free Church movement involved definite answers to these and all such questions. The history of the first three centuries was held to be the working out of the Free Church principle, and they were years of great liberty of opinion, of great diversity, but, nevertheless, years of success unparalleled in the subsequent thirteen centuries, and finding its parallel only in the freedom and progress of Nonconformity. The record of those intervening thirteen centuries testifies whether the new order of things commencing with Constantine was an

arrangement favourable to the Church's purity and its moral influence on mankind. Our forefathers believed the experiment had been so disastrous to the cause of true religion that the sooner it ended the better. They believed that Christ initiated a departure from the universal rule of State Churchism, and intended to revolutionise the religious ideas of the world—both Gentile and Jewish—in their political relationship as well as their personal spiritual aspects. The State Churchman might say the early Church did not expect the patronage of the Empire; the Free Churchman would say the Church did not need it, and when received it proved to be a loss and not a gain.

The Free Church movement is a denial of the premiss that national religion is an affair of statecraft or that personal religion is an affair of authority. The movement is based upon the positive declaration of the right of private judgment, consequent upon the doctrines of free grace and the Holy Spirit, on the fact of the spiritual nature of religion, on the independence of religion of political control, on the lawfulness of free religious organisation, and on the rightful claim of such free organisations to be in (*i.e.*, they are already in) the Church of the living God, of which Jesus Christ is the only Head.

Men holding these principles may suffer at the hands of other men, but if true to its foundation and tradition the Free Church can never be a persecuting Church. If the early Nonconformists sided with those who brought Charles I. to the gallows on other grounds than that he had betrayed his trust and was guilty of high treason against the nation; if the Roundheads fought the Royalists, not for religious freedom, but that they might snatch the power to

enforce their own religious opinions upon others; if those men ever used their political ascendency as a means of denying to others what others had denied to them, then they erred. We can afford to acknowledge that in the heat and turmoil of the time many a word would be spoken, many a thing done by them, not consistent with liberty and charity. Men in such excitements are apt to be driven to extremes, beyond their real judgment. But in view of the fierceness of the trouble through which they had come, the wonder is that there was not more of retaliation in their treatment of their opponents. And besides, the conditions of the struggle necessitated the mixing up of political with religious questions. Men are judged by the company they keep, but the judgment may be entirely wrong if the company is inevitable. So the political fighter would be derided for being with the Puritans, and the Puritan would be taunted with being a political dissenter and a believer in the use of force. He might well be so taunted if his aim was to compel others to his opinion, but he did not deserve it if his aim was to secure liberty to think for himself.

The denial of the right of private judgment in matters of religion is based upon the denial of *capability* of personal judgment. If the human mind is incapable of judgment, then, of course, it can have no right and no responsibility. But that would also shut out those who deny the right to others, since theirs is only a human mind. The denial stamps the race with imbecility. It may be said that theirs is the human mind plus the Spirit of God; they have received the oracles of God; but that is our ultimate contention in regard to all the children of God—the equality of spiritual privilege of all believers,

and hence the illumination is not a monopoly of an official class, but is the possession of the whole spiritual community. "They shall be all taught of God" is a prophecy never so completely fulfilled as in this age of the Holy Spirit. Both the Roman Church and the sacerdotal section of the Anglican Church assume the incapability of private judgment, and on that assumption it is natural enough that they should emphasise the doctrine of authority on the part of the Church and unquestioning acceptance on the part of the individual. But the assumption is false, degrading, and unscriptural. Happily both Churches have lost the power of enforcing their principle in the old way. That this is the position taken by those Churches will be evident from the following references.

Cardinal Vaughan (in *The Times* newspaper, August 7th, 1900) told the Roman Catholic Young Men's Society that "there are Catholics who permit themselves to read and discuss whatever is printed if it only falls under their notice and is written in an attractive style. They criticise the conduct of the Holy See, as though they had a mission to rescue the government of the Church from failure. These public criticisms and attacks on the Church, by children professing to belong to her, are proofs of uncatholic and disloyal spirit. The shepherds are over the sheep, and not the sheep over the shepherds." This lament and rebuke indicates two things—(1) that there is chafing under the intellectual fetters which the Roman Church imposes upon its adherents, and in that we rejoice; and (2) the Cardinal's complaint indicates that the old Church still denies the place of reason in religion, and takes away the foundation of individual responsibility. It is the logical completion of the

idea that the Church should do a man's thinking and believing for a financial consideration. "I rest my hope of salvation in another world on the priest. I leave it all to him, and I give him £50 a year for it," said an Irish nobleman to the late Rev. J. B. Armstrong, of Broomhedge.

What does the priestly section of the English Church say on the same point? There is a remarkable parallel. *The Church Review* for Aug. 23, 1901, in an article on the proposed Church Reform Bill, said—"Houses of laymen in connection with sacred synods are, of course, clean contrary to all Catholic rule and precedent. In the Catholic Church it is for the clergy to teach and govern and for the people to obey."

The founders of our spiritual freedom were profoundly right in attacking (and for themselves destroying) this fundamental error, and we see more and more plainly as we proceed both the insight and the boldness of those men. They fixed their whole doctrine of religion and of the Church in the soul of the individual believer; the appeal of God was to the personal judgment, heart, and will; that appeal involved the capability of intelligent and free response, and this again involves the *right* of choice and the *duty* of individual opinion. The Church cannot believe for a man; when a man hands over his soul to any other—either priest or Church—he attempts the destruction of his own moral identity, and when either Church or Parliament seeks to compel the individual to particular formulæ, it would turn personal salvation into a mechanical product. The reformed Church of England cannot complain that the Free Churches take their stand on this power and right of personal

opinion, since that was its own initial claim in its contention with the Church of Rome.

The issue involved in this claim of the Free Churchmen was an enormous one, and it was unique. It was a greater issue than that which divided the Church into Eastern and Western, or Greek Church and Latin Church. (1) The latter division took place because Constantinople claimed (*a*) ecclesiastical parity with Rome, (*b*) the parity of the Patriarchate and the Papacy, and (*c*) a difference, also, on the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit (the *Filioque*). There were other points of disagreement, *e.g.*, on the celebacy of the clergy, which the Greek Church ceased to insist upon. But these two divisions of the Church still remained substantially similar in principle, doctrine, and ecclesiastical order. (2) The cleavage of the English Church from the old Church meant the substitution of the King in place of the Pope, which was a more radical change than from the Roman Papacy to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. (3) The Free Church movement went further than both of them in doing away with Pope and King and Parliament in Church government, in asserting freedom of opinion, in declaring the simple commemorative character of the Lord's Supper, and in claiming the legitimacy of separated communities of Christians as belonging to the Church of Christ. The Anglicans called the separatists schismatics, but so also did the Latin and Greek Churches call one another, and so the Latin Church calls the Anglican Church to-day. But the Free Churchmen risked the blame and bore the reproach, because they were sure of their ground in claiming autonomy for the Church, which was the natural corollary of the right of private

judgment, as that also is the natural sequence of the universal bestowal of the spirit of grace and truth upon all believers.

The only essential unity of the Church is its spiritual identity. Whatever diversity of organisation or method there may be, wherever there is faith in the Son of God and obedience to the Spirit of God, there the link is which attaches the individual believer to the one Church, and which attaches any body of such believers, united on that foundation, to the Holy Catholic Church. The Apostles' Creed itself suggests as much when it puts into its third paragraph these separate, yet connected, sentences—"I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting," *i.e.*, the life of the spirit is the one life of all believers, is the bond of present fellowship, is the means of personal acceptance with God, and is the present measure and pledge of immortality and eternal life. This life of the spirit is God's direct gift to the soul. To deny this would be to deny Christ; to acknowledge this carries with it our primary contention. To deny us a place in the Catholic Church we must be denied a place in the Kingdom of God. To allow that we are Christians, and yet pretend to shut us out of the Catholic Church is nothing better than childish petulance or spite.

Each individual believer is a temple of God, because the Spirit of God dwells in him (I. Cor. iii., 16). A community of such believers is one body, and with Jesus in the midst is also a Holy Temple in the Lord (Ephes., iii.). Such persons, constituting such communities throughout the world, are the Holy Catholic

Church. The New Testament sets forth this spiritual presence, this one supernatural factor, as the universal and permanent heritage and distinction of those who belong to Christ—"I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"—all the days unto the consummation of the age (Matt. xxviii., 20). "I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter that He may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive, for it beholdeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: ye know Him, for He abideth with you and shall be in you. . . . He shall teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John xiv., 16, 17, 26). This language describes the spiritual illumination of the believing soul, and when such souls come together they have the Spirit among them, not in any sense separate from the individual souls, but guiding their deliberations, sanctifying their worship, and strengthening their hands by the inspiration of the souls there and then assembled.

In the Christian Church there is no spiritual monopoly, no spiritual caste, no talismanic virtue belonging only to a part. Is one a priest? so are all, and the one is not a priest otherwise than they all are priests. Has he received the Holy Ghost? so have all; if He does the will of God he shall know the doctrine whether it be of God, but so also must they try the spirits if they be of God, and they shall be "all taught of God." Dr. Hort, in *The Christian Ecclesia* (p 168), has well expressed this—"The members which make up the one Ecclesia are not communities but individual men. The one Ecclesia includes all members of all partial Ecclesiæ; but its relations to them all are direct, not mediate." That is to say, the unit of the Catholic Church is the believing soul.

CHAPTER XII

LITERARY MONUMENT OF THE MOVEMENT

A NOBLE monument of the fundamental contention of the Puritan and Free Church reformers is found in the Puritan literature of the period, one of the best examples of which is John Howe's work on "The Living Temple: or the notion improved that a good man is the Temple of God," in which the author exhibits not only the Apostle's simile as setting forth the spirituality and personal character of religion, but also the truth that to place religion "in nothing else but a mere assent to the peculiar opinions and an observance of the external formalities of their religious party is to remain without the life and power of religion . . . alienated from the life of God and utter strangers to the soul-refining, governing power of true religion." John Howe's father was a clergyman at Loughborough, in the county of Leicester, and was inhibited from preaching because of his sympathies with the Puritans. And John himself was one of the two thousand clergy driven into Nonconformity by the *Act of Uniformity*. John Goodwin, one of the ablest and most voluminous writers among the Puritan divines, also wrote a book of thirty-nine lengthy chapters on—"πληρωμα το

πνευματικον, or a being filled with the Spirit." This is characteristic of the whole literature of which we are speaking; it is suffused with the same idea—the doctrine of grace given to the personal believer by the illumination and power of the Holy Spirit, bringing him into living and direct communion with God equally with any of his brethren. There is no sacred enclosure open to anyone which is not open to all; there is no secret of the Lord which the Lord will hide from any that fear Him; there is no spiritual virtue attached to the ministry of anyone, no intercession or consecration or benediction, but the same spiritual virtue resides in all. If there comes to be a difference, if one man becomes a clergyman and another remains a layman it is because of the exigencies of the Church, which God recognises and meets by calling men whose aptitudes fit them as servants of His will in this work.

Another example of this teaching (from within the Established Church itself) is Jeremy Taylor's "Liberty of Prophesying," published in A.D. 1647. Professor Craik says this discourse did for freedom of conscience what Milton's "Areopagitica" did for liberty of the press. Taylor bases his plea for liberty and right of private judgment upon the following grounds—(1) The difficulty which all men find in expounding Scripture; (2) the insufficiency and uncertainty of tradition; (3) the fallibility of Councils, of the Pope, of ecclesiastical writers, and the Church as a body, and as arbiters of controverted points; and (4) the consequent necessity of letting every man choose his own guide, or judge of the meaning of Scripture for himself. "He called it a terrible folly to expect all men to be of the same mind: there was

room in Heaven for men of different opinions and so there ought to be on earth; unity may be desirable, but charity is even better than unity. The Apostles' Creed is the summary of the Christian faith, but it is not even necessary to believe this to be a Christian. It is enough to confess that Jesus is the Christ. There is no heresy where there is a good life. The party which called itself the Catholic Church assumed the office of judge of heresy and then went on adding new articles to the Christian faith. But those who judge are as likely to be in error as those who are judged. Protestants who take the Bible as their standard ought to be tolerant of those who differ from them, because of the uncertainty of the meaning of many things in the Bible. Every religion ought to be tolerated except it can be shown to be injurious to the State. God will not be angry with a man because he is in error if he has done his best to find the truth, and we should not be less tolerant than God is" ("The Church, Past and Present," p. 146).

Several things strike us as to Taylor's position. (*a*) We are surprised that, holding such views, he should have been the nominee of the infamous heresy hunter Laud. (*b*) Some of his arguments for individual liberty, *e.g.*, the difficulty of Scripture exposition, were the very arguments used by the opposite party in favour of authority and the subordination of the individual judgment. (*c*) His contention as to universal fallibility is not to be understood as a note of despair in seeking the truth, but that every man is equally placed for obtaining spiritual guidance for his own soul's salvation. The Christian classic, "Holy Living," has this as its joyful note, that the way of life may be found and followed.

When the Anglican revivalists of mediævalism, in the year 1832 and after, sought to buttress their teaching by the testimony of former days, they published a library of Works of the Fathers, thinking to justify their innovations by reference to antiquity. Dean Spence says—"To this massive work, from all serious members of the Church, from the Evangelical as well as from the High Church party, unstinted praise must be given. Of this valuable library forty volumes have been printed. The issue closed in A.D. 1885, and had been for the most part under the direction of Dr. Pusey. As a kind of offshoot of that literary effort the Ante-Nicene Library, in twenty-three volumes, was also published, comprising translations into English of the best parts of the extant writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325, the date of the Council of Nice." All this was significant of the point of view of the Oxford movement, which is more concerned with patristic and mediæval authority than with modern opinion or New Testament precedent.

The Dissenters had their literary reprisal. Their views were also set forth in the noble library of Puritan divines, published during the same period as the Works of the Fathers and the Anti-Nicene ecclesiastics. The writings of the Puritan divines were published by Mr. James Nicholl, of Edinburgh, under a board or council of publication, consisting of the Revs. Drs. W. Lindsay Alexander, James Begg, Thomas J. Crawford, D. T. M. Drummond, William H. Goold, and Andrew Thompson, with Dr. Thomas Smith as general editor. We are not aware whether this library was intended as a counterblast to the Works of the Fathers. It is virtually a reply, and is certainly a monumental treasure of religious literature

that will perpetuate for generations to come the teaching of the reformers of the 16th century. The volumes embody, in amplified and varied forms, the doctrines of personal spiritual grace and freedom which lay at the very root of the Free Church movement. With such a literary statement before us we can better understand the position our forefathers took and the vigour with which they defended it. With the Library of the Fathers on the one hand, and the Library of the Puritans on the other, it is as if the controversy of the 16th century were recited for our benefit and judgment.

It cannot be said that the early Nonconformists and Puritans lacked the culture of their age, as it could not be said that they lacked reverence and a spiritual ideal. The ejected ministers, as well as a considerable body of Free Church laymen, were men of University education the same as the clergymen from whom they separated. Howe, Goodwin, Marton, Adams, Swinnock, Baxter, De Foe, Bunyan, and Milton, and a host of others, are more than enough to give the stamp of intellectual merit to the ultra reformers. Of Milton and Bunyan we shall have more to say. At this point we only say that, taking him all in all, Milton was the noblest type of Free Churchman of the period, a contemporary of Jeremy Taylor at Christ College, and at one time himself likely to be a clergyman.

CHAPTER XIII

BRANDING DISSENT WITH IGNORANCE

DISSENT could not be summarily put down. Its doors were not closed, its ministers not silenced. Every known method of extermination had failed, and the movement extended instead of contracted. But a subtle idea took possession of the persecutors—they might destroy the power of Dissent by closing the Universities against its followers, thus branding the Dissenting pulpit with ignorance. It was hoped thus to strangle Nonconformity, to dry up the fountain of superior knowledge so far as they were concerned, and thus disqualify and discredit the Nonconformist pastor. There can be no doubt the meeting-house suffered after the first generation of Free Churchmen, who were University men, had passed away. But the nation suffered far more, and so did the Universities themselves, through the exclusion of so large and earnest a section of the people.

This exclusion was due to a mistake—another false idea, and was therefore not of the vital importance the persecutors supposed it to be. What the University could do for a man was symbolised by the word *culture*, when used in its scholastic and social import. It could give information, it could instruct

how to gain and utilise knowledge, it could quicken the faculties and widen the view of the mind, and, above all, it could create a sentiment of learning and superiority which is most healthful when it is least self-conscious. This was what Oxford and Cambridge could do for a man when they were in their best form for teaching and moulding students. But in their worst days, as the long years following the exclusion of the Nonconformists, these centres of learning shared the intellectual and moral laxity of the age, and University life was characterised by indolence, superficiality, and social extravagance rather than by hard study, self-control, and intellectual progress. The mistake was that the Free Church movement depended primarily upon any such culture as these institutions could give.

A hundred years ago Oxford and Cambridge were the only Universities in England, and they were hedged round by all kinds of restrictions which in theory kept out all but Churchmen, but which, in effect, kept out all but the sons of the rich. We are not unmindful of the rare intellects which have adorned the rolls of fame of these great schools. But stories are only too common of the easy indulgence with which noblemen and their sons were permitted to slip through their college course. In the period preceding A.D. 1867—the year when social distinctions, the last of the exclusive conditions, were abolished and University opportunity was opened to competing merit in every class, we read of such instances as the following. Gentlemen commoners would appear at "collections" for examination in Creasy's "Fifteen decisive battles of the world," which represented their whole term's work. One

young man who seemed to be doing nothing in classics was sent by his tutor to a course of lectures on the *Atmosphere*, and the tutor tested the measure of his pupil's profit by the course. "Of what is the atmosphere composed?" he enquired. And after long hesitation the undergraduate replied—"The atmosphere is composed of zinc."

The Universities were even less able to find religion for their scholars than brains or culture, and whilst the Free Church movement has never discarded or disparaged the latter, it has been essentially a spiritual, as distinguished from an intellectual, movement. It has discouraged the divorce of these two qualities, but it is primarily a religious movement, depending mainly upon spiritual factors, and aiming at definitely spiritual issues in the experience of men. If, therefore, its persecutors thought, as they appear by their actions to have thought, that the existence and progress of Nonconformity depended upon such preparation as the Universities could give even in their best days, they must have misread the movement, and they must have overlooked the book of the Acts of the Apostles. In two remarkable instances God put the truth into concrete form, and demonstrated the universality of grace and the common gift of the Holy Spirit acting through any human instrumentality He chooses.

The first of these instances was John Bunyan. This remarkable man did indeed lack culture. His early manner of life impresses us with his ignorance and coarseness. But as all the world now acknowledges, he really possessed great natural powers of imagination and oratory. Macaulay says that "Bunyan was far below Baxter and Howe in station and

acquired knowledge, but in virtue their equal and in genius their superior." Puritan influences powerfully moved him, and through a terrible process of agony and frenzy he came to have an experience of spiritual illumination and grace. At one time in this process he tried to persuade himself that he was a Jew, because he had the notion that only Jews could be saved. He said if he really had faith he would be able to work miracles, and was tempted to say to the street puddles "Be dry," and to stake his eternal salvation on the event. He had an impulse to pray to trees, and to broomsticks, and to the parish bull! Night and day, in bed, at table, and at work, evil spirits repeated in his ears (as he imagined) the words—"Sell him! Sell him!" He struck at the hobgoblins but always missed them, and answered them—"Never, never; not for thousands of worlds." At length, however, he was worn out by the conflict, and the fatal words escaped his lips—"Let him go if he will." He trembled whole days together with fear of death and judgment. He had, indeed, a narrow escape of death, and after the ordeal was over, it was many years before he recovered from its effects.

Such was the extraordinary preface to Bunyan's life work—the strange material out of which to shape so rare an example of "Grace Abounding!" Several passages of Scripture arrested his attention, and, professedly on his tinkering business, but really to hear their religious conversation, he often went to certain old women at Bedford. He joined the Baptist Church and began to preach, notwithstanding the proclamation against unlicensed preaching. On a winter morning more than a thousand people would come to hear him lecture, whilst on a Sunday his vigorous,

pointed, and pictorial addresses drew as many as three thousand to hear him. His rugged genius, lit up by a fervent spirit of devotedness, enabled him not only to exercise great influence over vulgar minds, but to extort the half contemptuous admiration of scholars. Six months after Charles II. landed at Dover, Bunyan was put into prison for persisting to preach—an unordained and unlicensed lay preacher. Endeavours were made to dissuade him from preaching, but he said he had a divine call and must preach. He was arraigned before several courts, was laughed at, reviled, caressed, menaced, but all in vain. "If you let me out to-day, I will preach again to-morrow," he said. In the overruling providence of God it was a good thing that his captors were in no hurry to release him! It was in prison that he became author. He wrote in controversy against the Quakers, against the Church of England, and against close Communion in his own denomination. One hardly knows to what humour to attribute his declaration that "those who have most of the spirit of prayer are to be found in gaol, and those who have most zeal for the form are all to be found at the ale house." He began "The Pilgrim's Progress" whilst in prison, and completed it in his own home. Some of his friends were scandalised by the book, and classed it with "Jack the Giantkiller," but others were pleased with it, and by A.D. 1685, thirteen years after his imprisonment, the work had reached its tenth edition. The second part appeared in A.D. 1684, and was soon followed by "The Holy War"—the second best allegory ever written, "The Pilgrim's Progress" being the best. No less than sixty of Bunyan's writings have been published, ten of them whilst he was in prison. The

number of editions, to say nothing of copies, of his greatest work cannot be told; year after year adds to the number, some of them for buyers at a penny, others produced in the highest style of the printer's and bookbinder's arts. And no book has been translated into so many languages except the Bible and "The Imitation of Christ."

Whilst Bunyan wrote controversially, and may be claimed as a staunch Free Churchman, his enduring service has been to reflect the religion of his party as a personal experience of divine grace, not doctrinally, not polemically, not ecclesiastically, not philosophically, but as a life of conquest over sin, of free grace, of universal Christian inspiration, of abounding hope of another life. He was God's reply and rebuke to the men who closed the door of higher education against Dissenters, and thought thereby to silence the pulpit and close the door of the meeting-house.

So, again, later, and on a larger scale, the same lesson was forced home by the rapid extension of the Methodist revival. Methodism was an Oxford movement, dating almost exactly a hundred years prior to the Oxford movement of Pusey and Keble, Newman and Froude. The two Wesleys, George Whitfield, and the other members of the "godly club" were Oxford men; and when the work extended, clergymen here and there sympathised with it and helped it on. But the evangel spread on every hand, and soon got beyond the power of these few men to deal with. When Methodist chapels were built and services regularly held in them, and when classes were formed, meeting weekly and contributing their pence, men had to be found who could effectively preach and "lead," or the work must either cease or become demoralised

for want of immediate oversight and guidance. Where were these men to be got from? Wesley would have preferred thoroughly educated men, but only few such men were available. The Church could not, or would not find them except in a meagre degree. There was no time to train men, and thus, by force of circumstances, Wesley had to choose men to preach whose only preparation and qualification consisted in a personal experience of religion and a ready utterance of what they knew.

This movement, also, was looked upon with disfavour by the Church party, even though it was strictly a movement in the Church's name and for the Church's advantage, and again the old method of suppression was adopted (A.D. 1768) by the closing of the Universities against the Methodists. This was even more cruel than the earlier exclusion, since Wesley and all his helpers claimed to be still within the Church; and it was also more fatuous and self-hurtful, since it was the first historical and ecclesiastical act by which the Methodists were compelled to recognise the fact that they and the Church had separated.

The Dean of Gloucester says—"Among the cultured classes the Methodist was an unpopular person. He was keenly satirised in the popular literature of the age, in poetry as in prose." But God found men for the emergency, and staggered the punctilious Christian world by giving these illiterate but inspired men phenomenal success. Everywhere He led them forth in triumph. And now, at the opening of the twentieth century and little more than ten decades after Wesley's death, Methodists constitute the largest Protestant Church in the world.

It seemed as if the Methodists had learned only too well, and not wisely, the lesson we have been emphasising, or as if the conditions of their early successes had prejudiced them against a college-trained ministry. But that has been only a partial, as well as a passing, phase of their history. With the increase of Universities and colleges whose doors are thrown open to all, and the raising of the standard of education among all classes, they are preparing to equip themselves more thoroughly through the educational advantages which the changed times have brought to them. It will be for the scholarly Methodists of the future to show, as in the parallel instances of St. Paul and John Wesley, that intellectual attainments are not unfavourable to a genuine and fervent evangelism—may indeed be as the polish to the arrow head, assisting both its speed and its final success. The strength of all the Free Churches is in what the true strength of any Christian Church must in the ultimate issue be—in the dominance of the free spirit of grace which is given to all believers.

CHAPTER XIV

THE TYPICAL NONCONFORMIST—JOHN MILTON

SOME of the great expounders of Free Church and Puritan principles have already been named in the course of our enquiry. But John Milton stands out above and before them all as the noblest type of Nonconformists in the days of the great contention.

Milton wrote many pamphlets—the popular method of the time, on Church and political questions, *e.g.*, On Episcopacy and Church Government, Of Reformation in England, Of Prelatical Episcopacy, The Reason of Church Government, A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes, On the likliest means to remove Hirelings out of the Church. These were written between A.D. 1640 and 1660, from the time of the Long Parliament, through the Civil Wars and the Commonwealth, and until the year of the Stuart restoration. During this stirring period Milton resided in London, and affairs reached the intensity of a national crisis, culminating in the execution of King Charles I. (A.D. 1649). It was in this memorable epoch that he also wrote On Education and Areopagitica, which was a plea for a free press, and directed against an ordinance of A.D. 1643 which forbade the printing of any book or pamphlet that had not been licensed and entered in the registry of the Stationers' Company. "Paradise Lost" was published

six years after this period. In those six years the *Clarendon Code* had been completed (comprising the Corporation Act, the Uniformity Act, the Conventicle Act, and The Five Mile Act). This historic setting of the great poem gives colour to the description of it as the *Puritan Epic*—it certainly appeared at a time when all that was represented by Puritanism seemed to be lost.

In considering Milton's position on Church questions, we should remember five things—(1) That the Reformation had evoked a livelier interest in Church questions among all classes. (2) The printing and wide circulation of the Scriptures led to the examination of the traditions of the Church in the light of the New Testament. (3) That there were two parties of Reform, (*a*) some wanting to retain the old organisation intact, but correcting its errors and stiffening its discipline, (*b*) some attacking the organisation itself, both as to its Monarchical Episcopacy and its alliance with the State through King and Parliament. (4) That the Church of England that was shaping itself before men's eyes was a compromise, intended to conciliate and unite Catholics and Anglicans and Dissenters. (5) That the Stuarts brought things to a deadlock by forcing a system of uncomprising Episcopal government on the Church, and a system of strict conformity on a people possessed of the idea and spirit of liberty.

In this crisis many of the ejected ministers were Nonconformists, in the modern sense of that epithet; others felt that by force of circumstances they must become so; some of these afterwards occasionally conformed in order to escape penalties and keep the way open for re-union. When Cromwell became

Protector he was faced with two questions—(1) Shall there be a State Church? (2) Shall the religious communities outside the Establishment be left free to work out their own doctrine and polity? He answered both questions in the affirmative. In giving effect to his decision that there should be an Established Church, he appointed "triers and ejectors," whose business it was to put out of the Church pulpits incompetent and unworthy men and put in "able and serious preachers"; he retained lay patronage—more than half the livings of the country fell to his own hand; and, he retained the system of tithes. We shall see that this was not Milton's ideal.

Neither did the Presbyterian position coincide with Milton's. The Presbyterians became dominant in Parliament, and in A.D. 1641-2, after a failure in each case, successfully persisted in passing two Bills—(1) One to exclude Bishops from Parliament, (2) the other to abolish Episcopacy as the form of the government of the Church. The Westminster Assembly was summoned (1643) for the purpose of arranging for the adoption of the Presbyterian in place of the Episcopal form of Church government, for framing a directory of public worship, for agreeing upon articles of belief and the issuing of the Longer and Shorter Catechisms. The Independents strongly opposed this movement; the army and Cromwell joined the opposition, which thus became victorious, leaving the Church as it was. In this contention Milton no more found his ideal in Independency than in Presbyterianism, since the Independents were so contented with their measure of freedom that they could support Cromwell in that first affirmative, which Milton could not do. Milton accused the Presbyterians "of tyranny

and corruption worse than that of the Bishops; he attacked their idea that heresies and sects should be suppressed by the State." And in that contention he was with Cromwell.

In A.D. 1659 Milton declared himself to be a Voluntaryist, *i.e.*, an opponent of a State Church of any kind: the compulsory payment of tithes he considered contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, and he would have ministers "support themselves by some trade instead of forming a separate and endowed class." His argument against Episcopacy and Establishment rested—(1) On the fact that the New Testament contained no authority for Episcopal government as it had come to be exercised; (2) he believed that the Scriptures taught the essential equality of all members of the Church; (3) he complained of the wealth and luxury of the Bishops and of the corrupting influence of Church Establishments; and (4) he objected to the union of the civil with the spiritual power, not as a question of prudence, or practicability, or superiority, but on the fundamental principle of righteousness. Hence he was not concerned to show that any other system was free from faults or was perfect in operation. It was enough for him that the principle of establishing a Church was wrong, and that in his judgment the free and voluntary system for all was not only the best, but the only right system.

There was no writer in his day the equal of Milton; and from that time until now there has been no expounder of Free Church principles who has so completely covered the ground or so convincingly set forth what is fundamental and abiding in the Free Church position.

CHAPTER XV

THE RIGHT OF FREE ASSEMBLY AND ORGANISATION

THE right of private judgment carries with it the liberty of its expression, hence freedom of conscience, as the term is used, means liberty of speech. The corollary of this fundamental principle is the right of free Christian assembly and organisation. Personal spiritual autonomy, under the spirit of God, involves the autonomy of the Christian community. The personal liberty may lead to wide divergencies of opinion, and organically it may lead to widely differing forms of Church order. But these men are Christian men so long as their faith centres in the incarnate Son of God. And these communities of Christians are Churches under the headship of Christ. They are the Holy Catholic Church, and they have the right, as inherent as the right of personal opinion, of banding together for sympathetic fellowship, of co-operation and self-government in affairs within the religious realm, without external interference. The break-up of organised Christianity at the Reformation was part of the providential method by which both religion and the Church might then and in future be saved from the corruption and feebleness into which

they had fallen. Religion in England and in Europe has not become a feebler force in consequence of the cleavage with Rome; the Church of Rome has itself been chastened by the altered conditions it meets with throughout Christendom, and the separated bodies have been mainstays of social order and inspiring agents of liberty and progress.

The Free Church movement has from the beginning been dexterous in division. Many Free Churchmen themselves believe the liberty has been used prodigally and recklessly, whilst the opponents of Dissent have often treated the fact derisively and used it as an argument in their own favour. There are Baptists, Independents, Moravians, Friends, Presbyterians, Unitarians, Wesleyans, the Methodist New Connexion, Primitive Methodists, United Methodist Free Churches, Independent Methodists, Bible Christians, and the Wesleyan Reform Union. And these are not all if we include undenominational "missions," "brethren" who struggle to evade any distinctive name, "disciples of Christ," and we know not how many others; some erecting buildings for their use, others content to meet in smaller companies in private houses, and altogether presenting a spectacle of complete confusion, disintegration, and schism to the eyes of those who can recognise the legitimacy of only one ecclesiastical organisation and order.

Notwithstanding the prevalence of the sentiment of re-union, and the actual attempts to realise it, the number of denominations tends rather to increase than to diminish. There may be much waste of energy in this dispersion; the effect on the individual character may be narrowness and a sort of pro-

vincialism; no doubt also the regularly organised Churches would be stronger for efficient service were the extraneous forces within instead of without their borders. But there they are, all free, and, with one exception, answering to the final test of a Christian Church—the belief in the Incarnation of Christ as the Son of God. Once fix the principle that uniformity is essential, and one and all these divisions must be condemned as sinful. But fix the contrary principle, that uniformity is not essential to the true unity of the Church, and then you can set no limit to the number of Churches that may be organised, all rightfully claiming to be Churches of Christ.

The most demonstrative instance of this tendency to division which has arisen in recent times is the Salvation Army. Its founder left the ministry of the Methodist New Connexion, and after some years of evangelistic and city mission work, he shaped the organisation with which his name will continue to be identified, and which he inspired with the energy which always so distinctly marked his own individuality. Its officers and companies and barracks may be found in every quarter of the globe. It aims at the social and spiritual regeneration of the submerged masses, and it finds fellowship for its adherents in prayer, praise, and testimony, though it ignores the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It is to all intents and purposes a Church, being a separate self-governing body for spiritual ends through faith in, and assertion of, the central truth. As its name indicates, its discipline is of the military order, which recognises a gradation of officers terminating in the Commander-in-chief. It is, therefore, not an example of ecclesiastical democracy, but an auto-

cracy, and one of the remarkable aspects of the case is that such a form of government should have arisen simultaneously with the new political democracy which has been almost created in the past fifty years.

The distinctive note of the evangel of the Salvation Army may be of use to every Church in suggesting the spirit and manner of its approach and appeal to the outside world—to the lapsed masses and unconverted men generally. It says—the first step in religion is self-surrender, capitulation; the first rule of life is obedience, intelligent and voluntary, but nevertheless obedience. *Believe, Behave, Be,* sum up its call; it will be time enough for you to look into the mysteries, and criticise the organisation and teaching of a spiritual movement when experience has given you the qualification. What the future of the "Army" will be, none can certainly anticipate. We have yet to learn whether it has within itself (in its present form) the cohesiveness necessary to self-adaptation to changing conditions and necessary to permanence.

We cannot but acknowledge the fact of these divisions; we may even allow that evils have been incidental thereto. But if we had to choose between these and the evils of organic unity as exhibited before the Reformation, and as illustrated in our own reformed Church of the 16th century, we should not be long in deciding upon the evils of freedom as the least of the two, especially since history has not honoured the prediction of Parker, Bishop of Oxford, that—"Christianity itself would be annihilated if the State did not use its authority to suppress the sects." The State has not suppressed the sects, and the sects increase, and yet England has not become anti-

Christian, but is still at heart Puritan and Protestant.

The great mistake of the 16th century was in denying the liberty to differ. The supremacy of the King over the Church as a part of the organism of the nation, may have made the thought of uniformity a natural one, especially when connected with the fatal error that religion was not a matter of personal judgment, but of observances and authority. The denial indicated distrust of the open vision, and the conviction that the power of religion would be broken with the breaking of the Church's organic unity. The mistake rested in the emphasis given to the outward features of religion over the inward, an endeavour to secure the inward by conformity to the outward; or else, and worse, it was due to disregard of personal conviction if only all fell into regimental line of ceremonial observance. There could be no surer way of packing the Church with hypocrites.

On the other hand, the Free Church movement runs riot, "runs to seed," when it carries to excess its freedom to organise, either through wilfulness, ill-temper, or personal ambition. Separation from a Church, or the creation of a new Church, can be justified only on the ground that the old Church has fallen into error and will not be corrected, or that some cardinal principle has failed to find embodiment in any existing community, or else that the old body has lost the spirit of vital religion and will not be re-animated. It is sufficient condemnation of all other divisions that even if they are not positively sinful, they are at least needless, may be ridiculous, and must result in hindrance to united action against evil.

There are two things we are not at liberty to do or allow to be done, with New Testament precedent

and teaching before us—(1) We are not justified in creating an ecclesiastical monarchy—as a pope, or autocratic bishop, and (2) we are not justified in allowing a political ecclesiasticism—*i.e.*, an "Established Church" which allows its spiritual functions to be decided by a political parliament.

(1) An ecclesiastical monarchy is a form of Church government which vests the control of the Church in the bishops, and practically shuts out from voice and vote the general body of the Church. That a man should bear the title of bishop is not of the least importance. The pastor of a Baptist Church or the superintendent of a Methodist Circuit might harmlessly be so styled. But if bishop means ecclesiastical monarch, the government of the Church not merely centring in him, but being embodied in him, then we say there is a departure from the New Testament type, and the Church is deprived of the franchise which Christ and His Apostles recognised as the prerogative and right of the Church. No one will say that the Anglo-Saxon bishop—high priest and alderman, as he is now reproduced in the monarchical bishop of the Anglican Church, is the equivalent of the New Testament *episcopos*. Hence, both the Church of England and the Salvation Army, both of them highly autocratic, must change their polity, or the judgment of history will be against them, and the force of contending freedom will destroy them.

(2) So, again, liberty of organisation cannot carry with it liberty to organise an established Church involving (*a*) political supremacy in Church affairs, and (*b*) an unwarrantable distinction. The King and Parliament and revenue belong to all as citizens—to Nonconformists and Churchmen equally—for citizen

purposes. The establishment of every Church would be impossible, for the Nonconformist conscience would forbid it. The establishment of one Church above the rest, and as representing the faith of the whole, is itself a standing condemnation of those who would differ from it; and it is a profession of national faith to which, at the present time, half the Christian people of the land will not be parties. The evil effects of this invidious distinction may be observed in the fact that the great body of Anglicans deny that Dissenting communities are in any true sense of the word Churches at all.

These two principles—*established church* and *free church*—are mutually antagonistic; they are diametrically opposed to one another; they cannot both be justified by the New Testament; and any attempt to place them amicably side by side must, in the nature of things, fail. They are in conflict on an essential principle, and the conflict will end in universal Free Churchism. The ultimate reason of this lies in the fact that political ecclesiasticism is an alliance out of accord with the recognised type. The control of religion by a body of possibly irreligious men does not commend itself to any party as a realisation of New Testament principles. The incongruity is being increasingly felt, and revolutionary changes are approaching, which will have far reaching consequences on all the Churches.

It was the fear of this evil that led to the limitation of public life or office to Churchmen. The idea was consistent enough that a Parliament which had to legislate for the Church ought to be composed of Churchmen. And so long as Parliament was a picked and packed assembly of Churchmen it might be

regarded as the lay embodiment of the Church—the Church in lay-convocation. The Church was thus self-governed at that time, in the sense that none outside the Church had control of its affairs. But this was completely changed when Parliament ceased, in that sense, to be the Church. Such change was inevitable as time went on, and the Free Churches increased and their members showed patriotism and political sagacity. The doors of Parliament could not long remain bolted against so large and powerful a body of men as were found to be outside the Church door. The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, the passing of the Toleration Act, the admission of Jews, Roman Catholics, and even atheists to Parliament, created a new problem in Church government—a problem which the Anglican is compelled to face, but which he is slow to face, since he still indulges himself with the hallucination that by one method or another he will yet bring all back to the forsaken fold.

The scandal of a spiritual body being governed by such an assembly as the English Parliament is not due to the removal of disqualifying religious conditions—that was a pure act of justice: it was due to the initial mistake of yoking religion with politics in the manner we know to have been effected. The removal of those repressive measures was a recognition of the right of private judgment and the right of free organisation, without any disparity or disability; and those tests will never again be placed upon the statute books. We have, therefore, made some approach to the original position. It was never contemplated by Christ and His Apostles that non-acceptance of their message should disqualify a man for civic position. Still more inconceivable is it that

in their view a different interpretation of the same Christian facts should exclude dissentients from secular positions and responsibilities. The course of events has certainly created a dilemma for the Anglican Church, but the course was inevitable, is irrevocable, and must be reckoned with. Freedom of speech and association and access to civic position could not be withheld from Free Churchmen. The dilemma and scandal were due to the false relation which the Church had allowed itself to enter into, and the distortion of national life which was thus brought about.

The other party to this false relationship—the Parliament—is less and less disposed to exercise its ecclesiastical functions. And the Church itself is less and less disposed to allow the intervention of the Parliamentary hand in its affairs. It is easy to see at what issue these currents must mutually arrive. Two conclusions are forcing themselves into the actual condition of things—(1) The Church of England is far on the way toward having no efficient executive power, and the symptoms of "governmental paralysis" are becoming more and more pronounced; and (2) the rightfulness and religious efficiency of the Free Churches are questions that have already been taken out of the realms of problem and doubt. In other words, mere theories, and prestige and privilege, are being swept away by the actual course of events, and the conviction is being forced upon the minds most unwilling to recognise it that a political ecclesiasticism is not justifiable and is not expedient, and that the Church must be free to do its own business through its own courts.

Opinion seems thus to be converging to the point

which has been held by the Free Churches from the first. Experience has become a more powerful factor than the polemics of the press or platform or pulpit—though it ought to be remembered that these polemics educated opinion and created new conditions which determined the course of experience. "The Church was morally disestablished by the change in our polity which placed its destinies in the hands of a constituency and a legislature in which Dissenters from the State religion formed a very powerful element. From that day the Church of England began to appeal to its own spiritual authority and to exert its own internal energies. It became a voluntary body in three ways—in the multiplication of churches dependent upon voluntary offerings, in the founding of schools without endowments, and in the multiplication of Colonial bishoprics" (Cardinal Manning).

The New Testament Church is thus coming into view as the only practicable one, viz.—the whole Church actively concerned in the Church's affairs, and the Church free to organise and control itself in its fellowship, its faith, its business, and its mission to the world. The question of historicity is changing its form. Chronological succession is of little moment by the side of spiritual succession; and that Church which most perfectly realises the New Testament idea is in the best sense the primitive and historic Church.

Any particular local church is an accommodative realisation of the Church of the living God. It is not the whole Church, neither is it merely a piece of a church, having part but lacking much. Every community of believers in the Son of God, the Redeemer of the World, has within itself every element of Church life belonging to the whole universal Church; it is a

microcosmic Kingdom of God because of its immediate relation to Christ and the Holy Spirit. This is the high and Catholic doctrine of the Church which the Free Churches set against another doctrine which embodies the Church in its priesthood and excludes the great bulk of the Christians of Protestantism—Lutheran and Nonconformist alike.

Anglicans of every school almost systematically avoid applying the term Church to Dissenters. They call them Nonconformists, Dissenting communities, denominations, sects, parties, and other evasive and denying titles, but seldom churches. Simple a fact as this may appear, it is full of significance of cleavage at the very root. It has been no uncommon thing in the past for Church people to attempt to alarm Chapel folk by the assurance that they were without God, and had no ground of hope for the future life so long as they remained outside "the Church," meaning, of course, that theirs was the only Church. But such things are amusing rather than alarming. The Free Churchman is neither unchurched nor unchristianised. On the contrary, he is conscious of having a place in the Kingdom of God and a part in the blessing of the New Covenant. The spiritual life which flows through the whole body does not leave the Free Churches as so many limbs smitten with either atrophy or atropia. Freedom of organisation has not interrupted their participation in the common life. Were all the denominations to become organically one they would be no more the Church of God than they now are. The ideas of "Catholic Church" and of "one Church" do not necessitate uniformity, either of interpretation or manifestation, so long as the one foundation stone is the basis of faith and work.

"Catholic Church" is a phrase which the Church itself has created. We are not bound to the words and the meaning the Church has attached to them as if they were scriptural language. Neither the faith nor the Church of Christ would fall were the phrase to drop instantly out of use.

Our doctrine of the Church synchronises with our doctrine of the right of private judgment, which centres in the inalienable freedom of the mind, and the efficacy of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, for guidance and fellowship and effort. The two things are corelated, and must stand or fall together. Hence those who deny the right of private judgment are consistent in denying the right of free organisation. The two together not only make diversity allowable but inevitable, and yet the essential unity is maintained, and will not be broken except by violating "the unity of the spirit"—which is a better phrase than "Catholic Church," and is scriptural. And this twofold notion of liberty necessitates non-interference from without. To hand over our liberty to another is to sell or give away our birthright, or is to shirk our first responsibility; it is to disqualify ourselves as channels of divine grace, and to place the strength and progress of religion on false grounds.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RIGHT OF THE CHURCH TO FIX ITS OWN STANDARDS

ALONG with the right of private judgment and liberty of Church organisation must be placed the right of Churches and clusters of Churches to be founded and governed by the standards of faith, and customs or rules, which the members mutually agree upon, and with which no outside authority may interfere. The question whether this or that body of Christians is true to the New Testament type is for itself to decide, though public opinion has a right to express itself in friendly criticism. No Church may claim a monopoly, or compel unwilling support from outsiders, but within itself it may insist upon the maintenance of its discipline and the support of its institutions by its adherents. A Church is within its rights in having its Thirty-nine Articles, its Bishops, or even its Pope and its crucifixes and doctrine of transubstantiation. The Presbyterians may have their Westminster Confession and meet in Synodical Assembly. Congregationalists have the right of independency or the isolation of separate Churches, each on its own foundation of faith. Communities may thus fix their own lines, and invite men to their fellowship, taking their chance

of winning confidence and adherents on the principle that the fittest will survive. They may require all their followers to be loyal or else to seek more congenial fellowship elsewhere. Churches are not under obligation to be constantly adapting their standards to suit individual differences, but to offer fellowship to all who agree upon the main lines. Any community, to be an orderly and effective instrument of religion must have its principle of cohesion and a definite message to mankind. Ropes of sand have no strength in them, and will tow no boats to land.

In that way Churches cannot avoid being exclusive. They cannot consistently receive or retain those who vitally differ from them. Romanism and Protestantism are mutually exclusive: so are Episcopacy (meaning personal rule of Bishops) and Presbyterianism; so are Trinitarianism and Unitarianism. Churches have to work out their own principles and open their doors to those who accept the rule of the house in which they purpose to live, but close the doors against fractious discontents who might cause only disunion, weakness, and bitterness. If any man prefers the rule of another house he should knock at that door. The Roman and Anglican Churches have equal right with the Free Churches to have the orders and ordinances and discipline they prefer. But none of them have the right to force their way upon the others, and their right does not extend to presuming to represent the faith of the others, nor the demanding of support from unwilling and unbelieving outsiders. Separation, on equal ground, and by natural classification, secures more perfect sympathy and co-operation, *i.e.*, unity, than any artificial and compulsory system of comprehension would secure.

Unity is one of the signs of a true Church. Cardinal Manning said so. So say we. Catholic unity means agreement within the fold on essential matters. We also go thus far. But we do not mean the same things by these terms. What we mean by the terms is that the Roman Church should have its formulæ and be true to itself; it will then, in our sense, be a united Church. The Anglican Church should have its Articles and rubrics, and be true to itself. Any Free Church should have its terms of fellowship and government, and be true to itself. No Church can be united which says both Yes and No, which is both Papal and Protestant, which acknowledges the "Son of God" and also denies Him, which attempts the irreconcilable principles of a monarchial Bishopric and a democratic system of Church life. Any other unity than that of the agreeing company of believers is practically impossible so long as human freedom remains. The fusion of all differences could be accomplished only by the destruction of individuality and the banishment of reason. But since that is a process evidently not designed by God in the gift of human faculties and of a Divine revelation, we conclude that the only unity God cares about is the unity which is consistent with diversity and freedom.

The alleged confusion of the Free Churches would be none the less a confusion, would rather be greater, were all schools of religious thought under one roof and named by one name. Truth and sincerity are more vital than external similarity. Schism is a lesser sin than false representation. The policy of comprehension of opposites in one broad Church would not make for simplicity, consistency, and effective service; it would only produce an artificial semblance of unity

with a thin veil to screen the actual divisions, or to hide the hideous spectacle of a soulless body without animation and liberty. Comprehension is not synonymous with unity, as separation is not synonymous with schism. There is no process by which contradictory opinions can become one. You may suppress differences and agree to say nothing, but is that worth calling unity? On such terms how many things are there on which the comprehensive Church could have a witness to give? You have Evangelicalism in one parish church, Ritualism in another, Latitudinarianism in a third, all under the one national flag, and all their clergy wearing the official uniform. Does that simplify the question—What is the truth the Anglican Church professes to represent and promulgate? Things would be worse still, with an element of the humorous added, if all three were equally recognised in each Church. The confusion of the separated Free Churches is simplicity itself by the side of such a conglomeration.

One of the theoretical advantages of visible unity is simplicity in presenting to the untutored and unchristian mind the truth which the Church seeks to promulgate. We all invite a man, and he naively asks—Which of you is right? It is an effort worth making to secure a plain witness, and the Church is under obligation to the world to secure it. There is a judgeship of the Church and its members by the world which is to be expected and reckoned with. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." "Let your light so shine before men that they may glorify your Father which is in Heaven." The world knows that the ideal of religion is perfection, and it will tolerate

nothing less under the banner of religion and of the Church. It is a great exaction, but it is a splendid testimony to the character of the Christian revelation, and also to the moral perceptiveness of mankind that in this the voice of the people is the voice of God, the word of both is—"Be perfect." But would comprehension secure the simple and consistent embodiment of religion that is so much desired? When a man seeks the fellowship of a Christian Church he naturally expects that that Church has a basis of faith and fellowship, and is pervaded by a moral sentiment which reflects the Christian ideal. He would expect a system of faith and discipline analogous to a set of principles which he would expect in any political or social organisation he proposed to join. He would not join an organisation which allowed its members to believe what they liked and do what they liked, that had no principle of cohesion, no principle of co-operation, no ideal of life on the line of the purpose of the institution. And so a man's understanding of religion would not be clarified, his respect for the Church would not be strengthened, by the discovery that both he and his score neighbours might go as many different ways under the name of the same Church.

Our seeker for the true faith and Church will at least stand as good a chance of understanding religion and of respecting the Church if he finds in the Church he joins a definite basis of fellowship in things commonly accepted and observed by its members, whether by generally acknowledged custom or by formal statement. And his mind will be still further assured, as he comes to know, as in the case of the Evangelical Free Churches, that in these separated

bodies there is a very substantial unity of faith and worship, and that the differences are to a great extent on minor matters of administration and method, about which there may be expected to be, in all free communities, room and liberty of choice. It is a great thing to be able to say that so far as religious faith and feeling are concerned it is indifferent whether a man joins this or that Evangelical Free Church. The grounds of preference are reduced to the narrowest point when it is only a question of bringing up, or the accident of friendship, or local convenience, or of opinion as to the best and most congenial way of conducting Church business. Among such Churches, as well as in each one taken by itself, there is far less diversity than will be found elsewhere, *i.e.*, freedom and diversity of operation have tended to real unity, whilst an attempted forced unity by conformity and comprehension has led to essential inconsistency, and therefore spiritual disunion, which is the only disunion that will ever do religion much harm. Coming to these things with his unprejudiced and unsophisticated mind, the convert may think some of these organic divisions wasteful and childish and the sooner ended the better, but he comes to know that the divisions do not compromise essential things or real unity; he needs no teaching in the truth that the human mind must be allowed some scope, and that classification of men and methods, by a sort of natural selection, makes for peace and effective service better than an artificial and chafing union which is based on toleration instead of agreement.

The essential oneness of all the Evangelical Free Churches has become recognised by all except those who think they have capital to make by exaggerating

our differences. The Free Church Council, the Free Church Catechism, the co-operation of these Churches in evangelising efforts, their mutual helpfulness, interchange of pulpits, united Communion Services, their immediate acceptance of transferred members—in these and other ways they show that they have discovered their fundamental unity, outside which their differing opinion and fancies are of insignificant importance.

There is a grand reality underneath these differing phrases and interpretations of unity—all are agreed upon this, the Church is one before God, and its worship is one at the Throne of the Heavenly Grace. Whether we describe our organisations in the plural or singular there is but one Church of the living God, centred in Christ and in His name, gathering round the Mercy Seat, and impartially regarded by the Father, though in differing phrase they pray. Each soul has his place and experience in the City of God —his own identic life which can never be lost, or lost sight of, or obliterated. But each soul also helps to make up another and broader life: by association with others he comes to have an added force and privilege and opportunity, which could never belong to him if he remained isolated. That fuller life is not merely an aggregation of units: the aggregation becomes a new unit. Each unit gains a second self and acquires a power, and imparts a power, impossible to the whole number in isolation. A hundred men united can do what a thousand solitary men could not effect. It appeals to our imagination that God sees all souls as one, but it is more fanciful than real: it corresponds with that other idea that the immortality of the individual soul is finally merged in the identity of the race.

There is no city apart from the individual citizens, yet the city is always more than its individual citizens. So the spiritual house is built up of separate living stones. The ecclesiastical effort after unity is a childish literalising of the communion of saints. The Free Churchman holds that God does not need the accommodation which such literal reduction involves, and that he himself does not need it, since he is conscious that so long as he is one with God in affection and faith he cannot be outside the circle of those who "surround the throne." He knows no Catholic Church but that, no communion of saints that stops short of that limit, though the actual line may be known to God only. The Kingdom of Heaven is not in meats and drinks and divers washings—neither is it in Popes and Bishops and Elders and Articles and ceremonies; much less is it in Test Acts, Acts of Uniformity or Toleration Acts or any such contrivances of prejudice and ignorance, but in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Nevertheless, the re-union of Christendom is a fair vision, and an object to be promoted by every reasonable means. Division is justified only by important principle which cannot otherwise be asserted. And division should not be maintained when the difference of principle has passed away. And further, separated Churches ought always to be striving toward a point of equitable reunion. Liberty must not degenerate into license, neither must it be headstrong or fastidious.

The union in Scotland of the Free Kirk and the United Presbyterians is an object lesson, especially in regard to the motive which is most powerful in leading up to union. Attempts had been made at

union before, which apparently came to nothing. When union did become a practical question it was due to an education of the Christian conscience of the two bodies as to the true nature of the Church and the schism of inadequately justified separation. Even then there was no particular enthusiasm of sentiment for union. The movement up to that point was not influenced by any strong wave of spiritual fervour or emotion; but the strong conviction gradually took hold of the two denominations that union was right and to remain apart was wrong. It was only when they began to give actual shape to this conviction that their hearts became warmed with emotion and enthusiasm; and ultimately the union took place amid great demonstration of popular interest and reverent jubilation.

It seems to us that the union movement in England, whether of Congregationalists and Baptists, or of any or all the bodies of Methodists, must proceed along the same line as the Scottish union. Our approaches have hitherto been mainly due to sentiment and expediency. Deep, strong conviction has nowhere been very manifest. Among members of Churches generally there is no intelligent opinion worth naming as to the nature and functions of the Church. A great work of education has to be done before the question of union can strongly grip the conscience and heart of English Free Churches.

CHAPTER XVII

AUTHORITY IN A FREE CHURCH

WE have reached the conclusion that the Church has liberty of organisation so long as in its government the members are not disfranchised and so long as the Church retains to itself control of its own business within the spiritual sphere. We have also seen that the separated Free Churches are veritable Churches resting on the one foundation, achieving spiritual results, within the Holy Catholic Church, truly united together and to Christ by the one Holy Spirit who lives and rules in all faithful hearts.

Now we come to inquire—What is the true authority which it is the prerogative of any such Church to exercise? Is there any legitimate authority beyond that which these Free Churches possess and are constantly exercising?

As long as there was but one ecclesiastical system, one order of discipline, and one Council or Sanhedrim it might be possible to secure unity of a regimental type. During a thousand years prior to the Reformation the Church had an opportunity of showing what such uniformity by authority could do. The opportunity was more narrowly (in that sense more simply) conditioned than John H. Newman argued for

when he said—"The only question of private judgment is what and where is the Church?" *i.e.*, you judge where the authority lies, then leave all the rest to that authority. In those earlier days there was no choice. We question whether the choice is worth anything in our day in the eyes of high Churchmen, who stoutly deny that any Free Church has any authority at all, or that anyone is at liberty to accept of such supposed authority. At heart we believe these men would say the legitimate choice lies between the Roman Church, the Greek Church, and the Anglican Church.

It cannot be said that in the issue of that long opportunity the unity and authority of the Church achieved conspicuous success in leading the world forward in paths of purity and peace, nobility and philanthropy; in doing away with squalor and ignorance, and in making mankind generally prosperous, virtuous, and happy. And although in our day the tendency is synthetical, and there is less and less room and hope for personal ventures and small communities, yet the conviction exists that large bodies, even of religious people, are apt to become corrupt and oppressive as they gather into their fingers the threads of public life. Uniformity is necessary to such authority as the Church acquired during that millenium, but the break-up at the Reformation and the rise and growth of Free Churchism in England has for ever destroyed that unity and the mischievous authority which it made possible, and which brought all under its oppressive ascendency. But organic unity such as was striven after, and is now eagerly desired by many, is not necessary to such authority as legitimately belongs to the Church, none of whose

members are left without the inspiration which giveth understanding.

The authority which found realisation in history, allowed, if it did not encourage, political bondage and social degradation; it narrowed the place of reason and personal responsibility; it permitted the Church itself to become corrupt through the abuse of its own powers; it so impaired the vision of the Church that it could not see its own degeneracy; it anathematised the men who would have reformed the Church; and it shifted the base of religion from the word of divine revelation to tradition and the *ipse dixit* of the Church, which in the end means clerical authority.

Our movement stands opposed to all such authority, as being contrary alike to Scripture, to reason, and to expediency. Against it the Free Church sets an authority which the New Testament sanctions and illustrates, the rightness of which is not hidden in metaphysical abstruseness, but is self-evident to those concerned in it, viz., to those who become living members of the living Church. The Free Church movement has all along been an attempt not only to free religion from political control, but also to restore religion itself to its true power over men—to an authority which is natural and Scriptural and therefore sufficient, an authority which is consistent with freedom of personal responsibility and is in no way a stifling of human reason. The movement stands for purity and essential unity by freedom, by appeal to individual conscience and heart and will as the only victory which is a real extension of the supremacy of Christ and His truth. At the very foundation of our policy is the conviction that in the issue freedom will work both for sanity of judgment and safety of

organisation. A book entitled "Steps toward Rome," by a Catholic priest named Duggan, contains these striking words—"Disunion comes from rebellion, and rebellion comes from tyranny, and tyranny is only the exaggeration of authority pushed to excess. . . . Rebellion comes from too much ruling; blind obedience makes blind subjects, blind subjects make blind rulers, and we know what happens when the blind lead the blind." Cardinal Vaughan reported the book from which these words are quoted as "offensive to pious ears, temerarious, and scandalous." But that report is no reply to the logic or the philosophy which the words express.

A Free Church has authority, and as much of it as may be entrusted to any body of human beings. It can agree upon its doctrinal teaching; it can receive members on that foundation and expel those who are unfaithful; it can fix its own government and elect its own officers and pastors. But it cannot give a man a place in the Spiritual Kingdom, nor can it cast out the most unfortunate, but nevertheless faithful, soul. It can write no name in the Book of Life, neither can it erase a name. These supreme, vital, and final functions belong to God only.

We have no reason to expect or desire that Heaven will uphold all the acts of the Church. Many of our rules and customs, convenient enough for our purposes, can hardly be regarded as of sufficient moment to concern God, who will rather let us feel our way and learn by experiment and experience. Sometimes malice and ill-humoured zeal have led the Church to do things which it has rued and wished it could undo. The authority with which Saul of Tarsus was fortified when he set out for Damascus was not

sealed in Heaven, as the voice from Heaven demonstrated when it challenged the misguided man's authority with the question—"Why persecutest thou Me?" Has God confirmed the petty injustices, the persecutions, excommunications, riots, revolutions, destruction, and bloodshed, to say nothing of the endless resolutions and proceedings of Church meetings, Synods, and General Assemblies? No; God is not implicated in the expedients and conventionalities of any Church. We will not belittle our conception of Him by determining His measure after that fashion.

But He does determine our true measure. He may care little about our thousand and one regulations and administrative conclusions. But He cares infinitely about the fundamental truth and righteousness of things—the Being of God, the Divine Sonship of Christ, the reality of the Holy Spirit and His presence in the Church to lead and sanctify. When the Church rejects men who deny these, or, on the contrary, when the Church accepts into its fellowship men who receive these truths and act accordingly, its rejection or acceptance, its binding or loosing, is but the carrying out of His own will as revealed to us. God will stand by His servants. He will not commission them to be the "pillar and ground of the truth" and then discredit their fulfilment of the commission.

There is another phase of Church authority which must be distinctly put into view—its moral authority. The Church is a typical society having its own standard of character and of the mutual relations of the brotherhood. In the midst of the larger society it is as leaven, as salt, as a light, and it aims at the transformation of the whole after its own likeness. The new community is not to be seditious or re-

bellious; the things of Cæsar must be given to Cæsar. This society has to show that the practical observance of the gospel in its spirit and precept will render external authorities and powers unnecessary except in extreme cases, that ordinarily men will behave rightly toward one another because they love one another. Love is the fulfilling of the law, because it worketh no ill to his neighbour. The brethren are not to go to law with one another, an additional reason for which lay in the corruption of justice in that age. In case of dispute (we may presume of more than trivial importance), and failing personal efforts at reconciliation, failing also friendly intervention, then, says Christ, tell the Church, and if the intractable brother (whichever of them it be) "will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican." A step consistently following this reference to the Church, and the disregard of its judgment, would be that the irreconcilable man should be required to withdraw from a fellowship for which he has no moral reverence, and which he will only disturb by his schismatical presence. It may be such authority as this would have to be exercised only seldom; it may be that in its literal sense it was only a provision of justice failing a reliable authority in the ordinary courts of the day. Anyway, it points to a moral authority and a reserve of judicial authority, which may be appealed to on occasion; and it assumes the existence in the Church of an impartial sense of justice which disputants disregard at their peril. To qualify itself for the exercise of such power, the Church must keep a clear perception and a fine moral touch, by close communion with the spirit of truth; and it must be superior to personal favouritism and animosities,

so that it may hold the balance evenly. Otherwise it is unfitted to judge and is unworthy of confidence or obedience.

In a formal way the Church may rarely become a Court of Equity: the true affection will make the occasions almost unknown. But the moral sense of the Church may be ascertained in other ways, and thus the ultimate reference be rendered happily unnecessary. This may come about by there being a generally recognised standard of integrity, what we term public opinion, within the circle of the Church. And even if, through some imperfection of vision or incompleteness of data, the majority be wrong, the true judgment will be made apparent to the man particularly concerned, and who wants sincerely to have right guidance and not merely to catch a triumph over another. Men are to settle their quarrels without delay, and they may be thankful for the light of righteousness which God makes to shine through His people.

There is, therefore, much in favour of the doctrine of Church authority as stated by the late Dr. Dale, that the acts of the Church have a supernatural validity. These are his words—"Just in proportion that a Church lives and acts in Christ does its power become the very power of Christ. The absence of a deep and strong faith in the supernatural validity of the acts of the Church is one of the chief defects of modern Congregationalism. We are almost alarmed by any theory which invests what seems a human organisation with spiritual authority, and have forgotten that since the Church is a supernatural society it is necessarily armed with supernatural powers" (*The idea of a Church*, in Ecclesia ii., 404). Yet Dr.

Dale would have been one of the last to support any dogma of infallibility either of councils or heads of Churches. The operation of the Holy Spirit is designed on a plan which leaves our freedom intact, and does not lessen the measure of our responsibility. But with the Bible before our eyes and the Holy Spirit within, the Church is in a position of great advantage, although the advantage may be lost through love of evil or through wilfulness. The Divine Teacher is infallible, but the scholar may be the subject of other influences to which he may yield obedience. So we learn by two processes—(*a*) by a right discernment of the Spirit's mind, and that process may be quick and happy and unfailing; (*b*) and we learn also by experience, which reveals failings of disposition and errors of judgment. Whatever aid God gives He does not discard the instrumentality of experience in educating the soul for the highest fellowship and the best service. The determinative sentence in the quotation is the first one—"Just in proportion that a Church lives and acts in Christ does its power become the very power of Christ." Experience is the final test and proof that the Church has thus lived and acted.

Though this may leave room for perplexity and mistakes, it nevertheless leaves the Christian man and the Christian community with an immense advantage over "the world" in discovering the truth and realising the highest ideals. The experience which is the final test and proof that the Church has lived and acted "in Christ" in this particular matter and that, becomes like a fresh volume of divine revelation available for reference and confirmation at any time. The spiritual man is more

likely to be right than the sordid man; the spiritual community is more likely to be right than any secular organisation, on questions of conscience and God. This cannot be construed into a condemnation of Reformers and Free Churchmen who challenged the doctrines and practices of the Church, since these men were not "of the world," but of Christ and within Christ's Church. They were in at least an equally good position for knowing the truth. If the question be, which of the parties in the Church was most really the Church, passing on the lamp of original truth, the testimony of history can alone give the answer. It will have been evident that in our judgment the true Church was with the men who strove after Church freedom, doctrinal correctness, and practical holiness, as against the men who disfranchised the Church members, sold the Church's liberty, upheld error, and lived unworthy lives. "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The true authority of the Church as of the individual teacher extends only so far and lasts only so long as it utters the truth and grace of God. There is "one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all. But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph. iv., 6, 7). "For ye all can prophecy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted; and the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets; for God is not a God of confusion, but of peace; as in all the Churches of the saints" (I. Cor. xiv., 31-2).

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FREE CHURCH MINISTER

IF so much may be said of the authority of a Free Church, what may be said of its minister or pastor? Is he still a layman? What is his place and power in the Church? What is his credential?

There is no reason for the supposition that the function with which our Lord entrusted Peter was one which would be passed on from him to any other. Neither Peter nor the early Church made that mistake; and the later Church would not have made it if it had not conceived the error of Papacy. "I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven." The words had an unique fulfilment in Peter's visit to Cornelius at Cæsarea, when the mission to the Gentile world was really begun, and simultaneously with the development of that propaganda, the door of Jewish opportunity began to close. That commission of the keys, the introduction of the Gentile to the Gospel, when against his own prejudices Peter was convinced that the old exclusiveness had passed away, was an event which in the nature of the case could not be repeated a second time. Its only analogous repetition is when the Christian missionary goes to a land and people and for the first time gives them the Gospel. The keys

given to Peter are the symbols of service and opportunity and not of authority.

The order of Apostles ceased with the generation that had known the Lord. The early Church did not perpetuate a title which to them had a well-defined significance—one who is sent out and could say, *I knew the Master.* There would have been much more reason in insisting upon the continuance of the prophetic line than the Apostolic. The Apostle went forth saying, "I have seen the Lord": the prophet had a spiritual illumination and could preface his message with his authority—"Thus saith the Lord." There could be no succession to the men whose eyes had seen. Happily there have been in all generations successors of the prophets, whose souls have been lit up with Divine fire. The prophetic succession is not official, passing on from one to another either by personal impartation of the gift or by formal setting apart to the office. The Church has sometimes recognised the gift, sometimes it has not. It may be that there shall be men in the ministry who have nothing but the inspiration attached to ordinary discipleship, and there may be men out of the ministry illumined by the prophetic fire. The title prophet has passed out of use, but that which the title signified has not passed out of the life of the Church, and as in the beginning so now the gift is not confined to any fixed channel and is not dependent upon any official act. There is not need that we should again insist upon the departure of the priest as well as the Apostle. The universal priesthood of believers has taken away the official priestly class. The sacrifices the Church offers are designated by Peter himself as "spiritual and acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I. Peter ii.,

5). With the removal of the altar the priest disappeared from the Christian Church; with the removal of the eye-witnesses the Apostles ceased; but with the continuance of spiritual gifts the prophet is still among us. Whatever else the Free Church minister may be, he is no more than an apostolical or hierarchical succession than the Anglican or Roman bishop.

However spiritual gifts are distributed, and whatever titles we give, the Church is not embodied in its officers; it existed prior to its deacons, elders, and superintendents. In the New Testament references to Church officers we find nothing corresponding to the sacrificing *hiereus*, or to the monarchical bishop, no dominating authority acting independently of the community. The Free Church minister makes no such claim, assumes no such prerogative either of priestly function or monarchical authority. But on the other hand both the minister and the Church recognise "the orders" of the minister, and are satisfied as to their validity.

On the human side the Free Church pastor has no position but what the Church gives him, no authority that has not its fountain in the Church and that the Church cannot withdraw. He can speak for the Church and act in the Church's name and give formal completion to the opinions of the Church, but his speaking is not the Church's speaking since he is not the Church nor the equivalent of the Church. The Church may have occasion to repudiate its leader. He is not a lord over God's heritage, and he has no irresponsible power—a condition as wholesome for the minister as for the people. Yet as the chosen head of the community he must often give conclusive judg-

ment, and, if he be impartial and reasonable, his position and work will command the esteem and confidence and following of his people, all the more so because his authority is moral and not arbitrary. His strength lies in having thus secured the confidence of the people, and no occupancy of "a living" by purchase or patronage, no authority by mere appointment can compare with it in spiritual value and influence.

On the Divine side of the pastoral office the Free Church minister has received a gift. In addition to any natural aptitude that he possesses, and the call of the Church, he has been much moved by the Holy Spirit to this work. He has an inward sense or conviction that this is God's will concerning him. His ordination is not the act of bestowal and acceptance of qualification for his office, but the recognition of a qualification already in him, of a call already heard, of a duty already accepted. Grace for the high vocation is not passed on from father to son, nor transmitted from presbyter to presbyter. If the Spirit of God has not touched him and called him, he has no true commission; and if under those conditions the Church has still called him it has been guided rather by what is outward and natural than by what is inward and spiritual. A man who is called of God is not to suppose that he is placed at a point of vantage, from which he may set aside the whole constitution of the Church which called him, and arrogate to himself the Church's functions; but he has to take a place which is mutually related to the other ministries of the Church and for the Church's edification. The Free Churches do not hold that a man may take up this work of his own accord, as he might

take to any handicraft. And they do not recognise in one who is set apart any supernatural power by which he is separated and distinguished from the general body of the faithful. The Sacraments are not any more efficacious when he officiates than when any good man hands round the elements or observes the rite of baptism, or than the Lord's Supper would be if there were an open table to which all came in silence without any presiding presbyter or elder whatever. No official blessing or prayer brings about any transformation of the elements or secures for the recipient any saving virtue. The ministry is not a device for doing away with the spiritual responsibilty of the laity. Nevertheless the minister has a real place and a spiritual function in teaching and in devoutly guiding the worshipper to the threshold of the Holy of Holies—into which the worshipper must himself then enter and receive the bread of life. The sacramental grace is not negotiated, not mediated, but is directly between the Divine presence and the sincere worshipper. The true saving power God reserves to His own hand.

It is a matter of expediency that the most suitable men who are available shall be separated from business pursuits in order that they may devote themselves to personal equipment and to the opportunities of service which will be open to them. But this is not essential. A man might be ordained as the overseer of a Church and still earn his livelihood or a part of it by any ordinary business. Paul taught that if the Church retained the services of a man he had a right to expect honourable maintenance, *i.e.*, preachers of the Gospel may live by the Gospel. But he himself, in one special instance, and to prevent or remove

certain prejudices, preached the Gospel for nothing, ministering to the Church, and working with his hands for bread. He was as truly an Apostle whilst he did this as before or after. The poverty of the Church might make such an arrangement necessary, but apart from that, the early Church saw no incongruity in the dual arrangement; in the first two centuries it was a common, though not universal, feature of Church life. It is easy to see how such an accommodation might lend itself to abuse and inconvenience, and prudential considerations must have had much to do with the change by which a man was devoted to the overseership of a church or cluster of churches. It is probable that the change, innocent enough in itself, facilitated the growth of sacerdotal assumptions in the clergy. But the prior practice, in the earlier and purer years of the Church, testifies to these facts—(1) That the minister was freely acknowledged to be the first among equals, (2) that he was not a member of a sacerdotal caste or order, and (3) that he was in no sense of the word the embodiment of the Church—the Church incarnate.

Does not this line of argument answer for us the question whether lay preaching is allowable, whether the lay preacher is called of God and of the Church to preach and do all that an ordained minister does, so far as opportunity allows or occasion requires? The Free Churches have had many pastors who have at the same time been in business; even in modern times they have thus utilised the natural and spiritual endowments of many laymen in the service of this ministry. There seems to be a work of God in this, as a witness against the idea that no man ought to preach, or can be worthy of a hearing, or be capable

of Church oversight, who is not separated entirely to the work: it is a providential set-off to the priestly view of the ministry which the Oxford movement has endeavoured to revive. The ordination of lay preachers by the laying on of hands would be a legitimate ceremony in view of the examples of the first and second centuries. And probably, if these men entered upon their work (after adequate trial) with some such service as an ordination service, they would themselves be helped to due recognition of the sacred responsibility that rests upon them; and it would do much to remove false prejudice from the minds of those who listen. Let it be said also that lay preachers on their own part should do honour to their work by the utmost care and conscientiousness they can give to their duties, by general education, by particular preparation, and by public effectiveness.

There is a tendency in the opposite direction of these thoughts in regard to the true character of the Free Church pastorate. In claiming that these men are as truly Christian ministers as are the Anglican clergy, there may be a disposition to claim that all the clergyman reckons to do the Nonconformist minister also does, whereas the logical position is the reverse of this, viz., the clergyman really does no more than the Free Church minister does, although he professes to do a great deal more. There is nothing in his claim but assumption on his own part and imposition in regard to his followers. Not that any Nonconformists, who may be falling into the snare, would think of naming their ministers priests. But many of them would demur to the Sacraments being observed otherwise than with the ordained minister as the distributor of the elements. There

may be only innocent preference in this, or a feeling that the most solemn ordinance of the Church should be conducted by men of the best recognised gifts. But this is not so in all cases. There is danger of a worse evil creeping in—indeed this was the way the whole priestly evil *did* creep in. Our ministerial voice or hand carries with it no mystic virtue, else we have no plea against the Sacerdotalists. We disclaim it for ourselves; we deny it in them. We are simply ministers of Christ, called of the Spirit and the Church: and this carries with it, morally and necessarily, power and distinction enough—as much as any man may be trusted to use—as much as he can use profitably, humbly, and without oppression or imposture.

The appeal of the Anglican-Romanists to the Pope to declare the orders of the English clergyman to be valid was due to the pressure of this question—Is the clergyman a priest or a minister? In making that appeal it was tacitly admitted that the Pope had authority and competency to decide the question, else why appeal to him? In that view the appeal was a pitiable exhibition of feebleness and falseness to Protestantism. It indicated that in the opinion of those who appealed what is called historic continuity is the crucial point in the question of the true Church and the true Apostle. Having made their appeal and acknowledgment to the Pope, these men should be consistent and logical now they have received their answer, which in effect is that their orders are not valid. With that (holding the opinions they do) the invalidity of Anglican sacramental-sacrifice follows. And with that the very foundation of their Church is shaken—they are reduced to what they themselves

disparagingly describe as a Nonconforming sect, a religious society but not a Church. Those who appealed show no sign of being thus logical. Their good sense triumphs over their bad theology; they do not recognise themselves as unchurched. The mistake was in appealing. We can only hope that the breakdown of the hope will lead them away from the external chain of official persons in continuous succession to the far more vital credentials of personal experience of the Divine life, the immediate call of God to the soul, and the reasonableness of the Church itself having a voice and choice. The Free Church solemnly claims to be the possessor of these credentials; it is certain and content and strong in the possession, and it recognises the necessity and validity of no other powers or credentials in any Church or pastor.

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The principles which have been expounded and defended in the preceding chapters, and which have been historically developed in the Free Churches, are submitted as the positive, the constructive elements of Church life and organisation, authorised by the New Testament and justified by history and experience—principles which must ultimately transfigure the entire organised forces of Christendom. We are living witnesses of the process by which this is being accomplished.

Chapter XIX

THE GREAT RELAPSE, AND THE GRACIOUS REVIVAL

It is a fact full of painful interest and important suggestion that, after the stirring times of the Reformation and the origination of the Free Churches, a long season of social depression, of moral deterioration, and of spiritual apathy ensued. It seemed as if the force of both movements lay largely in the excitement of conflict, and when that was past, things were found to have been not much improved so far as true religion was concerned. We must remember, however, that reaction is the law of life, and that even the best forces, subjected to abnormal tension, are not outside the operation of this law. If we overdraw the account, nature will balance it somehow. There may be an honourable reaction which only means the recuperation of exhausted energies, and no great harm can come of that. But that was not the character of the collapse which followed the religious peace. A hundred and fifty years is a long period for a nation or Church to recuperate its nervous and moral energy. Worse facts have honestly to be acknowledged—both Church and nation, including all sects and sections, relapsed into indifference and wickedness. Hannah

More said she went through thirteen parishes, from which she found twelve of the clergy absent, and the one who was at home had a black eye through fighting. In the parish of Cheddar she found but one Bible, and that was being used as a prop to a flower pot. Bishop Leighton said the Church had a fair carcase, but the life was wanting. The upper classes of society became avowedly infidel and shamelessly immoral, whilst the lower classes were stupidly ignorant and grossly impious. One third of the men were swearers. In the House of Commons the great Wilberforce, redeemer of slaves, was satirically referred to as "the honourable and religious member." Of the six million of people in England and Wales in the middle of the 18th century, half were sunk in poverty, living on a scant supply of barley and oaten cakes; worse still, they were dull, earthly, despairing, almost fallen out of thought of God.

It may be that the political state of Europe and the constant drain upon England through frequent wars partly explains the relapse, as the desolation of the Black Death is said to have occasioned the disorganisation and feebleness of the Church in the 14th century. But the fact remains, and has no satisfactory explanation, that the Church of all names settled down in indifference to its place and mission in the world, and exercised no great moral control over the character of the nation. Neither the reformed doctrine of the English Church, nor its new royal headship, nor the freedom of religion in the Dissenting Churches, succeeded in evangelising the people or in keeping down the worst social elements which are always ready to burst forth. In view of the progress of the Church through the fire of the first three

centuries, and the grand moral triumphs it achieved, no extenuating circumstances can be pleaded that exonerate the Church in failure such as we now refer to. If the gates of hell prevailed, it was because the Church had become faithless. With the Bible circulating everywhere and read openly every Sabbath in every Church, with the doctrine of justification by faith as its evangel, and with the Free Churches multiplied on all hands, largely pervaded with the Puritan spirit and manner of life—notwithstanding all this the moral state both of the Church and the nation seriously degenerated. There appeared to be no more assurance of the progress of true religion after the Reformation than before. With the exception that religion had shaken itself free from foreign interference and had gained for itself liberty of free organisation, as in Nonconformity, the drift of things was much the same after the Act of Settlement (A.D. 1701) as before Henry VIII.

But that exception was of vast importance, and cleared the way for subsequent events. If it had not been for that freedom, Wesley's movement might have been ended summarily "by authority," and the rise of Methodism have been rendered impossible. We seem driven to the conclusion that the work of the 16th and 17th centuries was but a step, a stage in the evolutionary process, and that time must be taken to make its imperfectness manifest in the pages of history.

Two years after the Act of Settlement John Wesley was born, and that proved to be God's provision for completing the emancipation of religion as a personal spiritual force. He was well born—the son of an intelligent and devout clergyman, the child of a woman of remarkable common sense and piety:

Isaac Taylor said, "the mother of the Wesleys was the mother of Methodism." When he was six years old he was rescued from the burning manse. When eight years old his mother led him to the Lord's table. He was educated at Oxford, where he took his degree of M.A. He came to see the divine light through a conversation with Peter Bohler; and this is his own account of how he was ultimately converted—"I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing God's work in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation. And an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death." The late Henry Drummond facetiously said "there were Anglicans of every degree of height, Presbyterians of every degree of breadth, and Methodists of every degree of heat." Whatever heat there has been, or is, in Methodism, and whatever warmth entered the frozen Churches of the land by this means, the fire may be said to have been kindled in that hour before nine in the Aldersgate Street room, and Martin Luther was the fitting spark which began it, under the Spirit of God.

At Oxford John and his brother Charles, Whitfield, Hervey, and a few others joined in devotional exercises and in Christian work, living stricter lives than were generally followed, and thus exposing themselves to the ridicule of their lax neighbours, who called them Bible bigots, Bible moths, the Holy Club, and Methodists—a bye-name which was possibly suggested by the same name attached to certain

medical men in Rome who forsook haphazard ways of medicine and surgery and endeavoured to apply methodical science to their work of healing. Tertullian's testimony to the early Christians may be applied to these Oxford Methodists—"No name of a crime stands against them, but only the crime of a name."

Wesley became a clergyman of the Established Church at twenty-three years of age although his own spiritual awakening did not take place until twelve years later—May 24th, 1738. He reckoned himself a clergyman until he died. But no parish narrower than the world was wide enough for him, and against all recognised rules he preached everywhere—in the parish Churches, in temporary buildings, in private houses, and in the open air. His last sermon was preached in a gentleman's house at Leatherhead on February 23rd, 1791, from Isaiah lv., 6, 7—"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found," etc. The leading doctrines he preached were three, and they may easily be discovered in the words we have quoted describing his experience .in the Aldersgate Street meeting. First—the new birth; second—Scriptural holiness; and third—the witness of the Spirit.

The Church of which Wesley was a member and a clergyman refused to recognise his work, and failed to see in it the means of her own redemption. Hence the newly awakened souls were encouraged to form themselves into societies—it was to *a society* that he paid the unwilling visit in Aldersgate Street, and he fondly fancied that these societies were still inside the pale of the Church. Captain Foy of Bristol is said to have been the first to suggest this organisation, and the class meeting commenced with eight or ten

persons in London in A.D. 1738—the year of Wesley's enlightenment. These classes were formed everywhere where the evangelistic movement spread, and proved to be the germ cells of Methodism, the conservitors of the warmth which Wesley felt, and which he was the means of kindling on ten thousand hearths. These classes needed leaders, whose appointment by Wesley was the first great historic step in organising Methodism.

Then the heart of Thomas Maxfield was moved to preach, and without Wesley's knowledge he did preach, and Wesley would have stopped him but for his mother's advice. Maxfield was the first of a great army of local preachers which Wesley appointed. That was the second great step by which the evangelist founded a great Church though he knew it not. He was driven by the irresistible demands of the mighty awakening to use many of these local preachers as helpers in preaching to the congregations which were formed on all hands, and which met regularly for worship. Wesley himself appeared to have limitless time and exhaustless energy. Once asked how he would spend the following day if he knew it to be his last, he replied that "he would do just as he had already arranged to do—rise at five in the morning, preach; travel to the next place and preach; then meet the society, go to his bed to sleep, and wake up in Heaven." His travelling averaged fourteen miles a day mainly on horseback, and his preaching average was twelve times a week. In addition he may be said to have been the father of good cheap literature for the people by publishing thirty-two volumes on various subjects selected from other writers, as well as his own sermons. And this

extraordinary record extended over the long period of sixty-five years. Yet with all his time and energy he could not keep pace with the work. The assistance of a few sympathetic clergymen did not materially lessen the difficulty; if the whole body of clergy had thrown themselves into the work they would have been none too many. Chapels were being built—the first of them at Bristol, the foundation stone being laid May 12th, 1739—Chapels, places of meeting and worship understood to be attached to Churches. The congregations met off Church hours, and the members went to Church for the Sacrament. But the congregations needed supplying and overseeing, and such men as Thomas Maxfield were the readiest and best for the purpose. That was the third great step, the organising of a body of helpers, the origin of the Methodist itinerancy.

These helpers were isolated and scattered all over the land; yet their work was one, and they had to succeed one another. They were united and directed by the personality and genius of Wesley, and so they might have remained until he died, and then the movement might have become assimilated to the Church which had discarded it, or the congregations might have settled down as independent Churches. No doubt the former was Wesley's own desire and determination. A year or two before he died he ventured a prophecy which time did not honour—"When the Methodists leave the Church, God will leave them." But he was the unwitting instrument of a higher and stronger will than his own, and, like Saul, with his eyes open, yet seeing not, he called these helpers together to Conference in A.D. 1744—the one final step in the creation of the Connexionalism

which has been the secret of the practical efficiency and strength of Methodism. Wesley was a cultured man, a fervid evangelist, a master in organising, and he had a physical constitution tough as pin wire—a combination of qualifications rarely met with, and making a great career an absolute certainty.

These helpers Wesley ordained, and in that he broke from the Church more completely than in any other particular. It is difficult for us to conceive the conquest over training and Church teaching which this act of his involved. Neither is it possible for us to measure the glorious pressure of events forcing Wesley to do what his Church held could be done only by a bishop. We can but admire the practical common-sense and statesmanship which pushed aside his prejudices. It was an offering and a sacrifice of the instincts and habits of his life in the interests of the work which God was crowding into his hands.

But was Wesley the High Churchman we are told he was? His doctrine of the Sacrament was not what we have come to know as the High Church view, and hence he could hold no such opinion of ordination as the sacerdotal doctrine involves. In A.D. 1733 he preached and published a sermon on the Lord's Supper, in which he speaks of the bread and wine as tokens and signs, and says the design of this Sacrament is the continual remembrance of the death of Christ by eating bread and drinking wine which are the outward signs of the inward grace of the body and blood of Christ. In another sermon on "The Means of Grace," he repeats again and again that the bread and wine are signs—"By these double signs ye manifest your solemn remembrance of His death till He cometh in the clouds of Heaven." There is not

a word that suggests that he held the sacrificial view which makes the minister a priest who offers a sacrifice. Writing to his father and mother at Epworth, he says—"The very human nature of Christ is not in it (the Sacrament), and we cannot hold that it is in it without holding either consubstantiation or transubstantiation." That sermon of A.D. 1733 Wesley republished fifty-five years later, and within three years of his death, to which he added the statement that he had never varied in his teaching from what he had laid down in that sermon.

When Wesley ordained pastors and superintendent preachers we may depend upon it he did so because he believed in its validity for the purposes of the Christian ministry, purposes which his doctrine of the Sacrament shows did not include the gift of miracle—the official efficacy which changes bread to flesh and wine to blood. His views on Apostolic succession did not invest ordination with power to communicate qualifying grace, else he would never have presumed that he, only a presbyter, could do what the bishop alone was believed capable of doing. And indeed he did subject himself to much opposition and abuse, which proves that his opinion was not the one commonly held by his contemporaries. Wesley had said that he was convinced that "bishops and presbyters are of the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain." Charles Wesley said that "having come to that conclusion, his brother John would soon be led to put in into effect." And he did soon exercise it, carrying as much right and authority as if performed by a bishop. There was therefore nothing he could do as a clergyman that could not be done by the men he ordained. But he

advised them to follow his example and continue in the Established Church "as far as the blessed work in which they were engaged would permit." The sequel of history was that the work did not allow of his example and precept being followed. His eyes were holden that he should not see. He knew not that he was building a Church, yet it was even so, and he lived long enough to give order and stability to the wonderful work of God. When he died there could be no going back, but only forward. No Methodist Church or preacher throughout the world is ashamed or in doubt as to this historicity or authority.

The Church thus created was a Free Church although there never was a more absolutely monarchical bishop than Wesley. In this respect it and the centralised authority of the Salvation Army are similar. Wesley's will dominated, and when he said—"As long as I live the people shall have no share in choosing either stewards or leaders among the Methodists," there was no more to be said. This was possibly best for the time, demoralised and little used to self-government as the people were. But time was sure to bring important modifications. It was impossible that Wesley's personal power could fall to the hand of anyone who survived him. The whole genius of Methodism made for independence, freedom, democratic government. And hence the history of Methodism has naturally been a widening divergence from the Church which Wesley said Methodism must never leave, and an increasing elasticity and power of adaptation within the Wesleyan community itself, by which the laity have come to place and power in the administration of the

affairs of the Connexion. Methodism is a Church, and now calls itself such. Simple as the change from "Society" to "Church" may appear to be, it is significant of the spiritual certitude and the ecclesiastical self-reliance which inspire the body. Whether the divisions which have taken place have helped or hindered the process of democratising Wesleyanism may be a debatable question. Reformers are naturally impetuous and impatient with slow methods of progress. Better temper on all sides would probably have averted every one of the divisions. Temper is, however, always a factor to be reckoned with, and the best justification of the reform movements is to be found in the fact that so many of the demands made have been adopted, though after delay, and after the mischief of refusal had been wrought. But this is all past, and a new era of re-union has dawned. What is wanted to make the Methodists of all names one, is a common basis of ministerial and lay representation, forming a Conference which shall deal with all matters. At present the old Connexion has virtually two Conferences, the Clerical and the Representative (equal numbers of ministers and laymen), with well-defined functions, whilst all the other Methodist Churches have but one Conference. Between them all there are wide differences in representation, *e.g.* the Methodist New Connexion (A.D. 1797), and the Bible Christians (1815), having equal numbers of ministers and laymen, the Primitive Methodist (A.D. 1820) one minister to two laymen, the United Methodist Free Church (1857), having free representation of ministers or laymen as the Quarterly Meeting may please.

There are facts full of promise of the re-union of

Methodism—the minimising of the importance of organic differences and the deepening of the spirit of appreciation, affection, and co-operation. In doctrine, in evangel, in moral sentiment, these denominations are already one and together may be regarded as an ecclesiastical whole, and Free. The wonderful progress of this Church has turned the balance as between the Established Church on the one hand and the Free Churches on the other. Methodism may even be said to have had a Nonconformist ancestry, since Dr. Annesley, father of Susannah Wesley, had been the vicar of St. Giles', Cripplegate, but was ejected from his living in A.D. 1662, and "became the St. Paul of Nonconformists." Wesley's grandfather, also named John, was likewise one of the ejected ministers in 1662, and his son Samuel at one time contemplated entering the Nonconformist ministry, and made preparation to do so, but a change of mind turned him into the Anglican pulpit. Thus John Wesley had nearly been born a Dissenter! Was not the germ thought of Nonconformity born in him?

Whilst we attach John Wesley's name particularly to the Methodist revival, we are not unmindful of the important part which others took in it. In the earlier years Whitfield outrivalled Wesley as the apostolic preacher. "All force and impulse, he was like the powder blast in the quarry, and by one explosive sermon would shake a district and detach materials for other men's long work; but he had no aptitude for pastoral details. Wesley was a great preacher, and besides, a great ecclesiastical statesman, deft, neat, painstaking, with a beaver-like propensity for building and a king-like craft for ruling. Charles Wesley

filled the new tabernacles with melody, which fed the flame of piety from the purest oil of the sanctuary. Methodism was builded rapidly, but the walls would never have gone up so fast had they not been built to music" (Rev. J. Le Huray, at Centenary Meeting, A.D. 1891). It was the opinion of the late Dr. Martineau that the finest hymns in the English language were those of Charles Wesley.

The true greatness and glory of the Methodist revival lay in the fact that it touched and saved the people as no movement had done since Pentecost and the Apostolic ministry. The nation was in a state of spiritual destitution and caught eagerly at the bread of life when it was offered to them. "Columbus discovered America; James Watt, the steam engine; John Wesley, the million" (Rev. W. L. Watkinson). The movement had, therefore, the happiest effects upon the Churches of the land and upon the character of the nation. The Church which despised Wesley was spiritually revitalised, and moved to moral seriousness by his work; and the same may be said of the Nonconformist Churches toward which Wesley took an attitude of severe aloofness. Wesley gave check to the forces of ignorance and immorality which threatened the best life of the nation; he liberated the pent-up life of the people, unbinding it and giving it opportunity, as the coming of spring-tide unlooses nature and gives every vital principle a chance. It is thus in a sense quite natural, yet in the highest sense supernatural, that the spread of that warmth kindled in the Aldersgate Street meeting should create a new social atmosphere rendering the best things possible, represented by "the new philanthropy" which sprang up in the hearts of men in the last quarter of the

Methodist century and the opening decade of the 19th century. The names of John Howard (1773), Robert Raikes (1781), Edmund Burke (1782), Clarkson and Wilberforce (1787-1807), are like the names of household gods, and they speak to us of an enthusiasm of humanity lighted in men's hearts by the love of Christ, which sought the recognition and redemption of the humanity of the least and worst.

Lord Macaulay's opinion was that "Methodism was one of the most wonderful moral revolutions the world has ever seen." Cardinal Manning said that "had it not been for the preaching of John Wesley no man can tell how deep in degradation England would have sunk." Mr. Lecky—"Although the career of the elder Pitt, and the splendid victories by land and sea that were won during his ministry form the most dazzling episode in the reign of George III., they will yield, I think, in real importance to that religious revolution which had begun in England by the preaching of the Wesleys and Whitfield." At the Wesley Centenary Meeting in A.D., 1891, the late Dr. Dale was a speaker. A few of his sentences may be placed by the side of others in the *British Weekly* editorial of March 5th, 1891. In both quotations we get to the central point of the Methodist revival, which may easily be perceived to be the central point of the whole Free Church movement. Dr. Dale said—"But for Wesley's doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, Wesleyanism could never have had its great army of lay preachers and class leaders. If the power of the doctrine is ever lost, that great army will gradually break up and melt away." In the *British Weekly*—"It is to Methodists we look for an extension of the frontiers of our theology, which shall set out whatever

in mysticism is true and precious—the meaning of the doctrine of the inner light, of the freedom of those who are under grace, of Christian perfection, of the treading down of sin and fear, of the stillness of the soul, of the illumination of the Holy Ghost."

CHAPTER XX

PRESENT NEED FOR THE FREE CHURCH WITNESS

THERE is no sign that the Free Churches are disposed to terminate their witness for the freedom and purification of religion. Within their own lines they are more active and prosperous than ever, and they take a keen interest in all legislation which touches the principles of religious equality. The *Evangelical Free Church Council* is not, strictly speaking, a further development of the Free Church principle; it is a federation of existing Churches, and serves to give evidence of the essential unity of them all; it is a valuable agency in focussing the opinion and will of those Churches; and one of its happy results will be to foster the spirit that makes for organic union. The Council does, therefore, give to the Free Churches a unity they have never had before, and, in consequence, they are now able to express themselves with greater distinctness and force. At the moment this page goes to the press the Council is organising a powerful opposition to the Education Bill of the Government, which proposes to place sectarian schooling upon the rates and bring it into clerical hands by abolishing representative control.

From time to time the Council obtains and issues statistics of all the Protestant Churches, both in the United Kingdom and abroad. Probably none were more astonished than Free Churchmen themselves to find, in the first issue of these tables, that, in England, the Free Churches so nearly equalled in numbers the Established Church, and that, throughout the world, they very far exceeded it.

And there is no sign that the witness of the Free Church movement can at present be dispensed with. There can never be peace and equality so long as the Establishment of the Anglican Church is maintained, even were all the petty little differences removed—such as the differences recognised by marriage and burial laws. It is Establishment that lies at the foundation of our contention, and is the fertile source of all the efforts which the clerical party persist in making for the purpose of the Church's advantage and the disadvantage of the Free Churches. The equally open door to the Normal Schools and Preparatory Colleges for Teachers hinges on the question of Establishment; the support of sectarian teaching in elementary schools, by rates paid by men who entirely disapprove of such teaching, would find its quickest and best solution were the ground cleared of Establishment, and the Church itself saved through its own freedom.

The irksome provisions of the Toleration Act have been repealed or have become dead letters. There is no hindrance to our worship and work. But the assumption of superiority; the claim to legalised authority which makes the Church a monopoly in the view of the parish clergyman; the refusal of the Anglicans to acknowledge that any Dissenting community

is a "Church"; the clinging to the false idea that has underlain the Church's past policy of persecution; the persistent policy of compelling Nonconformists to pay for denominational teaching, whether in the old form of Church rates or the modern way of local rates covering a rate for the sectarian school—may be Anglican, or Roman Catholic, Methodist, or Congregational—these things are bad remains of still worse days. The days of persecution of the old physical type are over, but the days of irritation are not, and, should the latent force of compulsion show itself in any manner of revival of Church rates, the Dissenters will again expose themselves to "the spoiling of their goods" for conscience' sake. The Dissenters make no trouble of the want of recognition of their Churchmanship. They need no pity and ask no favours. Public attention is not now so much concerned with them as with the Church itself, which is indeed the chief sufferer from its own false idea and want of charity, and they (the Nonconformists) may yet be able to return good for evil by helping the Church to secure the freedom of which its own false idea has robbed it. The pride of place which the system fosters; the monopolisation of the religious care of the parish; the patronising air towards Dissenters; and the social and religious severance which all this brings about, can never be remedied so long as the Anglican Church clings to the skirts of the Parliament and Government of the nation.

We observe with keen interest and friendly sympathy the movement for autonomy going on within the Established Church. That Church has in many ways been made to feel the irksomness of its position—the difficulty of obtaining legislation—the

scandal of irreligious men, and of Nonconformists, having to legislate for it—and resort to process of civil law as the final mode of enforcing its spiritual authority. The remedy of the Free Churchman is simple and effectual—disestablish. It would be in the highest degree honourable if the Church would of her own will make the noble renunciation. But there are not many Anglicans who would lift a hand for that, and still fewer who are eager for it, as the price of the Church's own redemption. Many think they see the solution of the difficulty by retaining the Establishment, but giving the Church self-government. That is the present cry of the leaders of the Church. The autonomy of the Church is what the Free Churches want to see, but not with Establishment tacked on to it, for that would leave unchanged the principle against which they have contended. If the cry is for autonomy without aid but with official status, then we say it is only a weakness for any Church to buttress itself by such methods; and it would perpetuate the invidious and false distinctions between the Churches, and the consequent ill feeling and dis-union. We recognise no essential difference in these respects—that ours are Churches as truly as theirs, and there is no superiority of Anglican orders over those of Free Church ministers. The only logical position, therefore, is equality of freedom and opportunity for all. The Establishment of all the Churches is an ideal that can never be realised since the question is not one of jealousy, or rivalry, of precedence or prestige, but of conviction that the New Testament contemplates only a Free Church, and that the religion of Christ requires, for its fullest expression and most powerful appeal, a Church which is self-contained and self-governed and self-reliant.

And there will be need for the Free Church witness to New Testament truth, so long as it is possible for any considerable section of the Established Church to issue such manifestos as have come from the English Church Union during the past few years, aiming at organic re-union as well as doctrinal correspondence with the Roman Church. The one unanimously adopted at the annual meeting of the Union in A.D. 1900 may be fully given as a conclusive evidence of the real meaning of this large section of the Anglican Church—"We, members of the English Church Union holding fast to the faith and teaching of the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church—that in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper the bread and wine, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, become, in and by consecration, according to our Lord's institution, verily and indeed the body and blood of Christ, and that Christ our Lord, present in the same Holy Sacrament of the altar under the form of bread and wine, is to be worshipped and adored—desire, in view of present circumstances, to re-affirm, in accordance with the teaching of the Church, our belief in this verity of the Christian faith, and to declare that we shall abide by all such teaching and practice as follow from this doctrine of the whole Catholic Church of Christ." Lord Halifax (Chairman of the Union) declared that Churchmen would not endure that "the primitive and universal practice in the Church of reserving the blessed Sacrament for the sick and dying should again be taken from them"; also, "that if the opinions and prejudices of the multitudes outside the Church were to be considered a factor in the determination of Church doctrine and practice, the sooner the Establishment was destroyed

the better." The multitude outside will certainly have a voice in the matter so long as the Church is Established, and they will never admit that the doctrine of the above declaration represents the Christian faith of England. The first Free Churchmen had vision given to them of the perils of the new politico-ecclesiastical alliance and of the subtleties of the compromise effected in the time of Elizabeth. Subsequent history and the present day state of the controversy prove how true their insight was, how just their judgment and dissent. The efforts of the High Church party to bring about re-union with the Roman Church would alone justify the maintenance of the Free Church protest, and it will probably do more than anything else in opening the eyes of the people of England, and in convincing them that peace and safety can be secured only along the lines of Free Church principles both as to polity and doctrine.

For the nationalising of religion, or the religionising of the nation, the Free Churches are as eager as any others—the pervasion of our national life with the principles and motives of the religion of Christ. These Churches have been instrumental in doing much to raise the moral tone of private and public life, and to sweeten and beautify social life. Multitudes of their adherents have been rescued from debasement, and raised from obscurity, and made fit for places of private trust and public responsibility and honour. Not a little of the service which religion has rendered to the State, it has rendered through the channel of the Free Churches. The nation shall be saved, and religion be most firmly established in the land, when the Church trains men in reverence and righteousness, and sends these men out to give effect to their faith in the

manifold duties and relations of life, by their advocacy and voting in Council chambers, by their wise administration of affairs, and by their personal honour in all things. In this conversion of England the Free Churches believe, and toward it they have contributed a worthy share of generous giving and personal devotion. What the conscience and heart and will are to the life of the individual, we would make the Church to be to modern society, straightening its crooked ways, softening its hardness and asperity, and energising it in securing for every man justice and mercy.

Free Churchism is now acknowledged on all hands to be best for the Church, the Anglican plea for autonomy being witness; and whatever is best for the Church will be best for the nation. The Church free, and pure, and strong, cannot leave the nation fettered, and feeble, and vile. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your own doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."—(Isaiah i., 16, 17). A great teacher, lately taken from us, wrote in a somewhat satirical vein of our age, but underlying his words is the serious truth, that a nation is religious not in fasts, and festivals, and vigils, but in the embodiment of religion in life—"to do a piece of common Christian righteousness in a plain English word or deed; to make Christian law our rule of life, and found one national act thereon—we know too well what our faith comes to for that! You might sooner get lightning out of incense smoke than true action or passion out of our modern English religion. You had better get rid of the smoke and organ pipes, both; leave them and the

Gothic windows and the painted glass to the property man ; give up your carbonated-hydrogen ghost in one healthy expiration, and look after Lazarus at the door-step. For there is the true Church, wherever one hand meets another helpfully, and that is the only Holy or Mother Church which ever was, or ever shall be."—(John Ruskin—*Sesame and Lilies*, pp. 66-68).

THE END.

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